

ABRAM AS ISRAEL, ISRAEL AS ABRAM  
LITERARY ANALOGY AS MACRO-STRUCTURAL STRATEGY IN  
THE TORAH

Seth D. Postell  
(sdavidpll@gmail.com)

**Summary**

*The argument is made that through the use of literary devices, the individual stories of the Abram narrative (Genesis 11–15) were strategically arranged to correspond with Israel’s story as told in the Book of Exodus. Although previous commentators have observed some parallels between these two stories, this article asserts that the reach of this literary analogy extends further than a few identifiable similarities, and reveals an overarching compositional strategy. Potential meanings of this analogy vis-à-vis its similarities and differences are explored, and the use of this extended literary analogy is considered as a framework for appreciating the NT’s figural interpretation of some Pentateuchal narratives.*

**1. Introduction**

Moshe ben Nahman (Ramban, 12–13th c. AD) argued ‘Everything that happened to the fathers is a sign to the sons.’<sup>1</sup> Looking to the Patriarchal narratives for these signs by unpacking allegories could potentially open the door for all kinds of eisegetical interpretations at odds with careful exegesis. At the same time, it would be careless to dismiss Ramban’s assertion hastily without consideration, given the

---

<sup>1</sup> Ramban on Gen. 12:6 (Hebrew; all translations in this article are my own). Similarly, see his comments on Gen. 12:10 and *Genesis Rabbah* 48.7.

presence of manifold literary features such as allusion and literary analogy placed throughout the biblical text.<sup>2</sup>

Both Jewish and Christian scholars have already uncovered many of the literary parallels between Abram's story and what happens later in Israel's story, as will later be discussed, but it seems that the observable interplay of the two stories is far more extensive than may have been previously noticed.

Textual evidence indicates that the individual stories that constitute the Abram narrative (Gen. 11–15) have been strategically arranged to foreshadow Israel's exodus from Egypt, their journey through the wilderness to Mount Sinai, and the making of the Sinai Covenant. The abundance of shared language and themes ranging over such a broad swath of texts strongly suggests the presence of an overarching and unifying textual strategy. Israel came forth from the loins of their father Abram. So too did their history.

Many literary and thematic parallels can be seen between Genesis 1–11 and Israel's story as recorded in the Former Prophets (Joshua–Kings).<sup>3</sup> Adam's story, in terms of its textual strategy, seems to point forward to what would happen to the people of Israel, serving as an interpretive key for understanding Israel's story.<sup>4</sup> For this reason, reading and rereading Adam's story yields a far deeper appreciation of the meaning Israel's story in the Former Prophets. Similarly, I believe that the Torah's author carefully arranged a chain of narrative events in the Abram narrative which were intended to prefigure Israel's story, and that when placed side by side, the texts reveal a macro-structural analogy between the two stories that is worthy of our attention.

---

<sup>2</sup> Amnon Bazak, *Parallels Meet: Literary Parallels in the Book of Samuel* (Alon Shvut, Israel: Hotza'at Tvunot, 2005 [Hebrew]), 10, writes, '[T]he phenomenon of literary parallels in the various books of the Bible is not coincidental or occasional, but is found consistently and systematically in the books of the Bible'. A literary analogy occurs when one story intentionally alludes to and parallels another story for the purposes of comparison and contrast. See Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 21; Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical narrative* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 114, 132-33, 35, 41, 268-70, 365-66; Yair Zakovitch, *Through the Looking Glass: Reflection Stories in the Bible* (Tel Aviv: HaKibbutz Hameuchad, 1995 [Hebrew]); Jonathan Grossman, "'Dynamic Analogies" in the Book of Esther', *VT* 59 (2009), 394-414.

<sup>3</sup> Seth D. Postell, *Adam as Israel: Genesis 1–3 as the Introduction to the Torah and Tanakh* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011).

<sup>4</sup> It is equally correct to reverse the paradigm, i.e., 'Israel as Adam', and argue that Israel's story also points back to Adam's story. In other words, each text shines interpretive light on the other. See Ziva Ben-Porat, 'The Poetics of Literary Allusion', *PTL: A Journal for Descriptive Poetics and Theory of Literature* 1 (1976), 107-108.

The purpose of this paper is to present the textual evidence pointing to an intentional and extended literary analogy, and to offer a few possible explanations of its function in the larger context of the Torah story.<sup>5</sup> In the first part of this article, I contend that Abram's story literally paves the way for Israel's story. In part two of this paper, I attempt to interpret the data by asking three questions:

1. What is the purpose of the Abram-Israel analogy in the Torah story?

2. Is there significance to the point at which the two stories diverge?

3. What are the implications for our understanding of the NT's figural reading of some of the Torah's narratives?<sup>6</sup>

Many scholars recognise commonly accepted criteria for identifying literary parallels and analogies.<sup>7</sup> I propose the presence of an intentional literary analogy when both stories share unique and/or rare words and phrases as well as corresponding themes and motifs. At times, the rare words and phrases used by the author to signal intertextuality are what Michael Riffaterre calls ungrammaticalities,<sup>8</sup> cogently explained by Daniel Boyarin as 'the awkwardness of a textual moment, at any linguistic or discourse level, which by its awkwardness points semiotically to another text which provides a key to its decoding'.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> This study attempts to understand and interpret the Torah in its final form.

<sup>6</sup> On NT figural interpretation, see Dale C. Allison, Jr., *The New Moses: Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993); Richard J. Clifford, S.J., 'The Exodus in the Christian Bible: The Case for "Figural" Reading', *Theological Studies* 63 (2002), 345-61; Richard B. Hays, *Reading Backwards: Figural Christology and the Fourfold Gospel Witness* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014); Matthew Y. Emerson, 'Arbitrary Allegory, Typical Typology, or Intertextual Interpretation? Paul's use of the Pentateuch in Galatians 4:21-31', *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 43 (2013), 14-21.

<sup>7</sup> Moshe Garsiel, *The First Book of Samuel: A Literary Study of Comparative Structures, Analogies and Parallels* (Ramat Gan, Israel: Revivim, 1985), 25; Yonatan Grossman, "'Dynamic Analogies'", 396; Richard Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (London: Yale University Press, 1989), 29-32; Jeffrey M. Leonard, 'Identifying Inner-Biblical Allusions: Psalm 78 as a Test Case', *JBL* 127 (2008), 241-65; Yohanan (Ian) Stanfield, 'The Song "Ha'azinu" and its Presence in Isaiah 1-39' (PhD diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2012 [Hebrew]), 15-16.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Riffaterre, *Text Production*, trans. Terese Lyons (New York: Columbia University Press), 12, 51.

<sup>9</sup> Daniel Boyarin, 'Inner Biblical Ambiguity, Intertextuality and the Dialectic of Midrash: The Waters of Marah', *Prooftexts* 10 (1990), 29-30.

## 2. Literary Data

### *a) Scattering from a City of Bricks to the Land of God (Gen. 11:1-9 // Exod. 5)*

Abram's call to leave Ur of the Chaldeans (Gen. 12:1-3) and then his exodus from Egypt (Gen. 12:10–13:4) to go to the Promised Land are preceded by the Babel narrative (Gen. 11:1-9). The juxtaposition of the Babel narrative with Abram's call portrays the patriarch's departure as leaving a city built by people (Gen. 11:4, 31) to go to a land chosen by God (Gen. 12:1; cf. Gen. 2:8-14). Parallels with earlier narratives in the Primeval History (Gen. 1–11) not only serve to contrast sinful cities built by men with the land of God, but also echo Abram's westward journey to the Promised Land as a return to the Land of Eden (see Gen. 2:8).<sup>10</sup>

An indicator of literary analogy is the repetition of rarely used words and phrases in the context of parallel motifs. In this case, we see a shared use of the word for building bricks connecting the Babel narrative with the Exodus narrative. It is essential to note that the verb לִבֵּן 'to make bricks' and the plural noun לִבְנֵים 'bricks' are used together only in these two places in the Torah (Gen. 11:3; Exod. 5:7), and in both places refer to building projects that are antithetical to the purposes of God for his people. Just prior to Abram's exodus from Egypt (Gen. 12:10–13:4), the Babel narrative describes the building of a city of bricks (לִבְנֵים, Gen. 11:3). God, however, thwarts this building project by scattering its builders over the face of the whole land: וַיִּפֶץ יְהוָה אֹתָם מִשָּׁם עַל-פְּנֵי כָל-הָאָרֶץ (Gen. 11:8). Likewise, just prior to Israel's exodus from Egypt and return to the Promised Land, the Israelites build cities of bricks (לִבְנֵים) for Pharaoh (Exod. 5:7). This building project, however, is thwarted (Exod. 5:14-19) when the Israelites are compelled to scatter over all the land: וַיִּפֶץ הָעַם בְּכָל-אָרֶץ מִצְרַיִם (Exod. 5:12).<sup>11</sup> The nearly identical wording of Exodus 5:12 and Genesis 11:8 in a matrix of parallel motifs suggest the presence of an intentional analogy.

<sup>10</sup> Compare Gen. 4:16-17 with 11:2, 4; Gen. 4:26 with 12:8; see Postell, *Adam as Israel*, 88-91; 98-102.

<sup>11</sup> For other commentators who have noted an allusion to Gen. 11:8 in Exod. 5:12, see Amos Hakham, *The Chumash Shmot with the Commentary Daat Mikrah*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1991 [Hebrew]), 79; *Baal HaTorim Shmot* 5.12; *Panim Yafot Shmot* 5.12.

***Scattering from a City of Bricks to the Land of God***

And each person said to his fellow,  
 ‘Let us make bricks (נְלַבְנָה לְבִנְיָם)  
 and fire them by fire.’ And they had  
 the brick for stone and bitumen for  
 mortar. (Gen. 11:3)

And you must not continue  
 giving the people straw for  
 making bricks (לְלַבֵּן הַלְבָנִים) as  
 days past. Let them go and  
 gather straw for themselves.  
 (Exod. 5:7)

And the Lord scattered them from  
 there upon the face of all the land (וַיִּפֹּץ  
 יְהוָה אֹתָם מִשָּׁם עַל-פְּנֵי כָל-הָאָרֶץ  
 and they ceased building the city.  
 (Gen. 11:8)

And the people scattered in all  
 the land (וַיִּפֹּץ הָעָם בְּכָל-אֶרֶץ  
 מִצְרַיִם) of Egypt (Exod. 5:12)

In both Genesis 11 and in Exodus 5, the scattering upon the face of the land signals an important transition: the cessation of building cities for men (Babylon/Egypt) and a return to the land chosen by God (Canaan).

***b) Exodus from Egypt (Gen. 12:10–13:4 // Gen. 43:1–Exod. 12:38)***

Several scholars have pointed to the literary parallels between Abram and Israel’s exoduses from Egypt.<sup>12</sup> The Torah’s description of Israel’s Exodus story, starting with their arrival to Egypt because of famine, through their escape from Egypt (Gen. 43:1–Exod. 12:38) repeats key words, phrases, and themes found elsewhere only in Genesis 12:10–13:2, where Abram’s own exodus story is found. Both accounts describe: (1) a ‘heavy famine’ (Gen. 12:10; 43:1); (2) a descent to Egypt (Gen. 12:11; 46:6); (3) a ‘captivity’ in Pharaoh’s service (Gen. 12:15; Exod. 1:11); (4) plagues upon the Egyptians (Gen. 12:17; Exod. 7–12); (5) expulsion from Egypt because of plagues (Gen. 12:20; Exod. 12:33); (6) a departure with great wealth (Gen. 12:16; 13:2; Exod. 12:35, 38); and (7) the accompaniment of Lot/a mixed multitude (Gen. 13:1; Exod. 12:38).<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> See for example, Yonatan Grossman, *Abraham: A Story of a Journey* (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth Books, 2014 [Hebrew]), 58; John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as narrative* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 37-39, 141-42; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, WBC (Waco, Texas: 1987), 291-92; Thomas Römer, ‘The Exodus in the Book of Genesis’, *SEÁ* 75 (2010), 7-9.

<sup>13</sup> On the analogy of Lot and the mixed multitude, see Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as narrative*, 38.

### Exodus from Egypt

Famine in the Land precipitates a sojourn in Egypt	<p>And Abram took (וַיִּקַּח) Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions they had acquired (וְאֶת־כָּל־רְכוּשָׁם אֲשֶׁר (רָכְשׁוֹ), and the people they acquired in Haran, and they went out to go to the land of Canaan. And they came to the land of Canaan ... And there was a famine in the land. And Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, because the famine was severe in the land (כָּבֵד הָרָעָב (בְּאֶרֶץ). (Gen. 12:5, 10)</p>	<p>And all the earth came to Egypt to Joseph to buy grain, because the famine was severe over all the earth ... And the children of Israel came to buy among the others who came, because the famine was in the land of Canaan ... And the famine was severe in the land (וְהָרָעָב כָּבֵד בְּאֶרֶץ) ... And they took (וַיִּקַּחוּ) their live-stock and their possessions they had acquired (וְאֶת־רְכוּשָׁם אֲשֶׁר רָכְשׁוּ) in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob and all his offspring with him. (Gen. 41:57; 42:5; 43:1; 46:6)</p>
People of promise are taken against their will into Pharaoh's service	<p>And the princes of Pharaoh saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken to Pharaoh's house. (Gen. 12:15)</p>	<p>And they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens. And they built store cities for Pharaoh, Pithom and Raamses. (Exod. 1:11)</p>
God afflicts Pharaoh with plagues and the people of promise are sent away from Egypt	<p>And the Lord plagued (וַיַּגֵּעַ) Pharaoh with great plagues (גְּבִעִים) and his house, because of Sarai, Abram's wife ... And Pharaoh put him in the care of men, and they sent him away (וַיִּשְׁלְחוּ) with his wife and all that he had. (Gen. 12:17, 20)</p>	<p>And the Lord said to Moses, 'Still one more plague (וַיַּגֵּעַ) I will bring upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt. Afterward he will send you away (וַיִּשְׁלַח) from here. When he sends you away (בְּשִׁלְחוֹ), he will drive you away from here completely.' (Exod. 11:1)</p>
The people of promise and others with them go up from Egypt to the Land of	<p>And Abram went up (וַיַּעֲלֶה) from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him (וְלוֹט עִמּוֹ), to the Negeb. And Abram was</p>	<p>And the people of Israel did as Moses told them, and they requested from the Egyptians silver (כֶּסֶף) and articles of gold (זָהָב) and clothing ... And a mixed multitude (עָרֵב</p>

Promise with the wealth of Egypt	very heavy in livestock, in silver, and in gold (כֶּבֶד מְאֹד בַּמִּקְנֵה וּבַכֶּסֶף וּבַזָּהָב). (Gen. 13:1-2)	רַב) also went up (עָלָה) with them, and flocks and herds, very heavy in livestock (מִקְנֵה כֶּבֶד מְאֹד). (Exod. 12:35, 38)
--	---	--

The juxtaposition of the cessation of a building project with an exodus from Egypt in both stories creates a literary bridge binding the Primeval History to the Patriarchal narratives, and the Patriarchal narratives to the Exodus narrative.

*c) Lack of Resources Occasions a Conflict (Gen. 13:5-18 // Exod. 15:22–17:7)*

The accumulation of all these parallels and analogous literary material encourages us to continue seeking further analogies. Having just departed from Egypt, Abram takes his nephew Lot (Gen. 13:1) and begins his journey (וַיֵּלֶךְ לְמִסְעָיו, Gen. 13:3) back to the Promised Land. Soon there is a crisis: namely, a lack of resources. This crisis leads to a conflict (מְרִיבָה) between Abram and Lot's shepherds (Gen. 13:7-8), whereupon the nephew departs, choosing to live in a place reminiscent of Egypt's luxuries (Gen. 13:10).

As is the case with Abram and his nephew Lot, Israel journeys from Egypt (וַיִּסְעוּ, Exod. 12:37; 15:22; 17:1) with a mixed multitude (וּגְמִי-עַרְבֵי רַב עָלָה אִתָּם, Exod. 12:38). Soon the Israelites find themselves in a place lacking essential resources (Exod. 15:22). This crisis provokes two dire reactions from the people, presumably the rabble spoken of in Numbers 11:4. First, the people long to return to Egypt's luxuries (Exod. 16:3). Second, the lack of resources culminates in a conflict (מְרִיבָה) between the people and Moses (Exod. 17:7). Though רִיב is a commonly used root in the Torah,<sup>14</sup> Nahum Sarna notes that every other time מְרִיבָה is used in the Bible, with the exception of Genesis 13:8, it 'refer[s] exclusively to the controversies and grumblings of the people against their leader and against God over the lack of water during the wilderness wanderings'.<sup>15</sup> Though there is little shared language between Genesis 13:5-18 and Exodus 15:22–

<sup>14</sup> Gen. 13:7-8; 26:20-22; 31:36; Exod. 17:2, 7; 21:18; 23:2-3,6; Num. 20:3, 13, 24; 27:14; Deut. 1:12; 17:8; 19:17; 21:5; 25:1; 32:51; 33:7-8.

<sup>15</sup> Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis*, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1989), 98. See Exod. 17:7; Num. 20:13,24; 27:14; Deut. 32:51; 33:8; Ezek. 47:19; 48:28; Pss. 81:8; 95:8; 106:32.

17:7, there are still good reasons for interpreting Abram's story in light of Israel's wilderness journey. First, the presence of the ungrammaticality (מְרִיבָה) in Genesis 13:8 is striking. Why does a word used exclusively for Israel's wilderness wanderings with the exception of Genesis 13:8 appear here if not but to signal an allusion? Second, the exact sequence of events in the Abram/Israel stories (exodus from Egypt and conflict due to lack of resources) are difficult to explain apart from intentional allusion.

### Conflict Initiated by Lack of Resources

And he went by daily marches (וַיֵּלֶךְ) (לְמַסְעָיו) from the Negeb ... and the land could not support them to dwell together ... And there was a dispute (רִיב) between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock... And Abram said to Lot, 'Let there be no strife (מְרִיבָה) between you and me, and between your herdsmen and my herdsmen, for we are brothers ...' And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all the valley of the Jordan, that all of it was well watered—before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah—like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt (בְּאֶרֶץ) (מִצְרַיִם) as you go to Zoar. (Gen. 13:3, 6-8, 10)

And all the congregation of the people of Israel moved on from the wilderness of Sin by daily marches (וַיֵּסְעוּ) (לְמַסְעֵיהֶם) ... by the Lord's command, and camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. And the people disputed (וַיִּרְבּוּ) with Moses and said, 'Give us water to drink.' And Moses said to them, 'Why do you dispute with me? Why do you test the Lord?' And the people thirsted there for water; and they grumbled against Moses and said, 'Why, now, have you brought us up from Egypt (מִמִּצְרַיִם), to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?' ... And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah (מְרִיבָה), because of the dispute (רִיב) of the people of Israel ... (Exod. 17:1-3, 7).

### *d) Victory over the Amalekites (Gen. 14:1-16 // Exod. 17:8-16)*

The conflict narratives in Genesis 13 and Exodus 17 are both immediately followed by battle narratives: Abram against the four kings (Gen. 14:1-17) and Israel against the Amalekites (Exod. 17:8-16). Oddly, we find an out of place reference to the Amalekites in Genesis 14:7: 'Then they turned back and came to En-mishpat (that is,



Kadesh<sup>16</sup>) and defeated all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites who were dwelling in Hazazon-tamar.’ This mention of the Amalekites is clearly anachronistic since the Amalekites are descendants of Esau, Abram’s grandson (Gen. 36:10-16).<sup>17</sup> The interpreter is compelled to explain the purpose of the Amalekites in the text. The most likely explanation for this ungrammaticality in the Abram battle narrative is to anticipate Israel’s defeat of the Amalekites in Exodus 17:8-16. Another rather seemingly insignificant mention of the Horites (הַחֹרִי) in Genesis 14:6 becomes another indicator of analogy in light of the mention of Hur (חֹוּר) in the parallel battle account in Exodus 17:10, 12.

The larger narrative context in which the two battle scenes occur provides further evidence that the texts are intentionally analogous. Both battle scenes are sandwiched between an ‘exodus out of Egypt’ (Gen. 12:10-20; Exod. 1–14) and the appearance of a Gentile priest who blesses God (Melchizedek in Gen. 14:18-20; Jethro in Exod. 18).

### Victorious Battle over the Amalekites

And the Horites (הַחֹרִי) in their hill country of Seir as far as El-paran bordering the wilderness. And they turned back and came to En-mishpat (that is, Kadesh) and struck all the country of the Amalekites (וַיִּכּוּ אֶת-כָּל-שֵׂדֵה הָעַמְלָקִי), and also the Amorites who were dwelling in Hazazon-tamar. (Gen. 14:6-7)

And Joshua did as Moses told him, to fight with Amalek (בַּעֲמָלֵק), and Moses, Aaron, and Hur (חֹוּר) went to the top of the hill. (Exod. 17:10)

#### *e) Appearance of a Gentile Priest (Gen. 14:18-20 // Exod. 18)*

Genesis 14 and Exodus 18 are remarkably similar, both in terms of shared language as well as in terms of common themes.<sup>18</sup> In both stories, a Gentile priest appears (Gen. 14:18; Exod. 18:1) after a successful military campaign (Gen. 14:14–16; Exod. 17:13) and prior to the making of a very significant covenant (Gen. 15; Exod. 19–24).

<sup>16</sup> Sarna, *Genesis*, 106; Wenham, *Genesis*, 311, point out that Kadesh is a word commonly associated with Israel’s wilderness wanderings (see Num. 13:26; 20:1, 14, 16, 22; 27:14; 33:36-37; Deut. 1:46; 32:51).

<sup>17</sup> Traditional Jewish commentators explain the reference to the Amalekites by appealing to Isa. 46:10; God declared the end of the Amalekites from the beginning. See for example, *Gen. Rab.* 42.7; *Tanchuma* 14.1; *Pesiqta Zutarta* 14.7.

<sup>18</sup> See Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as narrative*, 280-81; John H. Sailhamer, *The Meaning of the Pentateuch: Revelation, Composition and Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 368-74.

Melchizedek's appearance bears all the syntactical marks of an 'ungrammaticality'. If one were to remove verses 18-20 there would be no break between the arrival of the king of Sodom and what he says to Abram. This interruption of the flow of the 'king of Sodom' narrative gives evidence that the author has strategically placed it here following the successful military campaign. In both stories, the Gentile priest offers and/or eats bread (לֶחֶם) with the victorious party (Gen. 14:18; Exod. 18:12). In both stories, the Gentile priest blesses God for the divine protection afforded the victorious party (וּבְרוּךְ אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, Gen. 14:20; בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה, Exod. 18:10). In both stories, the Gentile priest makes an offering in honor of the divine victory (Gen. 14:18; Exod. 18:12), bread and wine in the former case, a burnt offering and sacrifices in the latter case. And in both stories, the Gentile priest surprisingly is granted a place of greater authority over the victorious party. Abram deferentially offers a tithe to Melchizedek (Gen. 14:20). Moses deferentially submits to Jethro's counsel (Exod. 18:24).

### Ministry of Gentile Priest Prior to the Making of the Covenant

Appearance of a gentile priest after successful military campaign and prior to the making of a covenant.

And the king of Sodom went to meet him after his return from defeating Chedorlaomer, and the kings who were with him, to the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the Valley of the King). And Melchizedek king of Salem, brought out (הוֹצִיא) bread and wine, and he is a priest of God Most High. (Gen. 14:17-18)

'... The Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.' And Jethro, the priest of Midian (כֹּהֵן מִדְיָן), Moses's father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel his people, that the Lord brought Israel out (הוֹצִיא) of Egypt. (Exod. 17:16-18:1)

Gentile priest offers to/eats bread with the victorious party.

And Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread (לֶחֶם) and wine, and he was priest of God Most High. (Gen. 14:18)

And Jethro, Moses's father-in-law, took a burnt offering and sacrifices to God; and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread (לֶחֶם) with Moses' father-in-law before God. (Exod. 18:12)

<p>Gentile priest blesses God for protecting the victorious party.</p>	<p>And he blessed him and said, ‘Blessed (בְּרִיךְ) be Abram to God Most High, who created the heaven and the earth. And blessed be God Most High who handed over your enemies into your hand (וּבְרִיךְ אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֲשֶׁר־מָגֵן צָרִיךְ בְּיָדֶךָ). And he gave him a tenth from everything. (Gen. 14:19-20).</p>	<p>And Jethro rejoiced about all the good which the Lord did for Israel, how he saved him from the hand of Egypt (הַצִּילֹו מִיַּד הַמִּצְרַיִם). And Jethro said, ‘Blessed (בְּרִיךְ) is the Lord who rescued you from the hand of Egypt and from the hand of Pharaoh, who rescued the people out from under the hand of Egypt (הַצִּיל אֶתְכֶם מִיַּד מִצְרַיִם וּמִיַּד פַּרְעֹה אֲשֶׁר הַצִּיל אֶת־הָעָם מִתַּחַת יַד־ הַמִּצְרַיִם).’ (Exod. 18:9-10)</p>
<p>Gentile priest presents an offering in honor of the divine victory.</p>	<p>And Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine, and he was priest of God Most High. (Gen. 14:18)</p>	<p>And Jethro, Moses’s father-in-law, took a burnt offering and sacrifices to God ... (Exod. 18:12a)</p>
<p>Gentile priest granted a more authoritative role than the victorious part.</p>	<p>And he gave him a tenth from everything. (Gen. 14:20b)</p>	<p>And Moses obeyed his father-in-law and did all that he said. (Exod. 18:24)</p>

The ministry of Gentile priests prior to the making of the Torah’s two central covenants (Abrahamic and Sinai) is difficult to explain apart from an overt textual strategy designed to depict the making of one covenant in light of the other.

**f) Making of the Covenant (Gen. 15 // Exod. 19–24)**

Thus far, we have presented a chain of narrative events in the life of Abram that closely prefigure Israel’s story. It would appear that these parallels serve as background and props for some main event, and that they are building up to a crescendo. What is it all pointing towards? The apex of the analogy is the making of the covenants — the Abrahamic Covenant in Genesis 15, and the Sinai Covenant in Exodus 19–24. Both narratives are replete with shared language and common

themes that hold great significance.<sup>19</sup> First, both narratives emphasise the importance of faith (הַאֱמִינָה), faith being a central theme in the macrostructure of the Torah (Gen. 15:6; Exod. 19:9).<sup>20</sup> Second, in both narratives, God self-identifies to the covenantal recipient in virtually identical terms: ‘I am the Lord who brought you out of (אֲנִי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מִן הַחוּצוֹת מִצְרַיִם)’ Ur of the Chaldeans/the land of Egypt (Gen. 15:7; Exod. 20:2). The fact that this particular divine self-identification formula appears elsewhere only in Deuteronomy 5:6 and 6:12 tips the balance strongly in favor of an intentional allusion. Third, both accounts describe the fear of the covenant recipient along with the presence of supernatural darkness (Gen. 15:12, 17; Exod. 20:18, 21). Fourth, in both accounts, God appears to the covenant recipient in fire (אֵשׁ), smoke (עָשָׁן) and a torch (לִפְיֵד) (Gen. 15:17; Exod. 19:18; 20:18). It is essential to note that this is the only time ‘smoke’ (עָשָׁן) and ‘torch’ (לִפְיֵד) are used together to describe a theophany in the Hebrew Bible. Finally, both narratives describe the making of a covenant (Gen. 15:18; Exod. 24:8).<sup>21</sup>

### The Making of the Covenant

Both ‘covenant narratives’ emphasize the importance of ‘believing’.	And he believed the Lord (וְהֵאֱמַן בְּיְהוָה), and he reckoned it to him as righteousness. (Gen. 15:6)	And the Lord said to Moses, ‘Behold, I am coming to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe you (וְאֵלֶיךָ יֵאֱמִינוּ)’ forever.’ (Exod. 19:9)
Both ‘covenant narratives’ include a unique	And he said to him, ‘I am the Lord who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans (אֲנִי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מִן הַחוּצוֹת מִצְרַיִם)’	I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt (אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם), out of the house of slavery. (Exod. 20:2) <sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> See Ramban on Gen. 15:17; Wenham, *Genesis*, 333; Sailhamer, *Meaning*, 369; Römer, ‘The Exodus in the Book of Genesis’, 17-20.

<sup>20</sup> See Hans-Christoph Shmitt, ‘Redaktion des Pentateuch im Geiste der Prophetie’, *VT* 2 (1983), 170-89; Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as narrative*, 72-78.

<sup>21</sup> There are several other lexical links particularly between Genesis 14–15 and Exodus 18 that fall outside of the parallel plot structure in these narratives, yet whose presence strongly suggests intentional intertextuality: שְׁלוֹם (Gen. 15:15; Exod. 18:7, 23), גֵּר יְהוּדִי זָרְעֶךָ בְּאֶרֶץ לֹא לָהֶם//גֵּר הֵייתִי בְּאֶרֶץ נֹכְרִיָה (Gen. 15:13; Exod. 18:3), צֶפֶר (Gen. 15:10; Exod. 18:2), אֱלִיעֶזֶר (Gen. 15:2; Exod. 18:4), and עֶשֶׂר (Gen. 14:20; Exod. 18:21).

<sup>22</sup> Deut. 5:6; 6:12.

statement of God's self-revelation.	(הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֵנֶךָ) to give you this land to possess.' (Gen. 15:7)	
In the making of the covenant, the reciprocal party experiences terrible dread and darkness.	As the sun was setting, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him ... When the sun had set and there was darkness. (Gen. 15:12, 17)	And all the people saw the thunder and the lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, and the people saw and trembled, and they stood far away ... And the people stood far away, and Moses drew near to the thick darkness. (Exod. 20:18, 21)
In the making of the covenant, God appears to the reciprocal party in fire, smoke, and a torch.	When the sun had set and there was darkness, behold, a fire pot of smoke (תִּנּוֹר עָשָׁן) and a torch of fire (לֶפֶיד) passed between these pieces. (Gen. 15:17)	And Mount Sinai was engulfed in smoke (עָשָׁן) because the Lord descended upon it in the fire (אֵשׁ), and its smoke (עֲשָׁנוֹ) ascended like the smoke of a kiln (כִּבְעֻשָׁן הַכִּבְרֵשָׁן) ... And all the people saw the thunder and lightning (הַלְפִידִים) and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking (עָשָׁן) ... (Exod. 19:18; 20:18)
The making of the covenant itself.	On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram ... (Gen. 15:18)	And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, 'Behold the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you ... ' (Exod. 24:8)

### 3. The End of the Abram-Israel Analogy

In examining the remarkable similarities between the two stories, it is also clear that the parallel tracks of the two stories diverge at a particular point, but this in itself is a literary device not without significance. The Abram-Israel analogy has been consistent since Genesis 11, but after five chapters of parallels, the analogy falls apart. The breakdown of the Abram-Israel analogy comes with the account of Hagar in the desert in Genesis 16. Hagar, rather than Abram, is the primary focus of the storyline,<sup>23</sup> and in place of the Abram-Israel

---

<sup>23</sup> Grossman, *Abraham*, 113.

analogy, we find an unexpected analogy between Hagar and Israel.<sup>24</sup> Hagar and Israel are both slaves who have left Egypt (Gen. 15:13; 16:1) and are afflicted (עָנָה) by their masters (Gen. 15:13; 16:6, 9).<sup>25</sup> Both flee (בָּרַח) from their cruel masters to the desert (Gen. 16:6, 8; Exod. 14:5), to springs of water (Gen. 16:7; Exod. 15:27) in or near the Wilderness of Shur (Gen. 16:7; Exod. 15:22) and Kadesh (Gen. 16:14; Num. 13:26). Finally both are heard and visited by God because of their afflictions (Gen. 16:11; Exod. 3:7; 4:31; see 22:22).<sup>26</sup> Even the name Hagar (הַגָּר) is suggestive of Israel's future status as strangers (גֵּר) in the land of Egypt Gen. 15:13).

This sudden shift in analogous characters is attention-grabbing. Yonatan Grossman argues quite convincingly that changeovers of characters in an analogy are a function of literary strategy.<sup>27</sup> He calls these changeovers 'dynamic analogies'. According to Grossman, the shift in analogous characters purposely 'present[s] an obstacle to the reader in maintaining a steady reading of the analogies between the narratives'.<sup>28</sup> In this particular case, Israel's identification with Hagar, rather than Abram, immediately after the 'making of the covenant,' presents the reader with a substantial obstacle. Why the sudden change in such a sustained and consistent analogy between Abram and Israel?

### *What is to be gained by seeing this extended analogy?*

In light of the literary evidence presented, I want to refer again to the three questions presented at the introduction to the paper. The first two questions are directly tied to the meaning and function of the Abram-Israel analogy in the Torah and the third question relates to the NT's figural interpretation of some of the Torah's narratives.

---

<sup>24</sup> For an extensive treatment of the Hagar-Israel analogy, see Römer, 'The Exodus in Genesis', 11-17. Matthew Y. Emerson, 'Arbitrary Allegory', 19, writes, 'What we see, then, from the verbal and conceptual connections between Genesis 16, 21 and Exodus 12-19 is that the Hagar narrative foreshadows the Exodus narrative ...'

<sup>25</sup> Grossman, *Abraham*, 113-14; Emerson, 'Arbitrary Allegory', 20.

<sup>26</sup> Emerson, 'Arbitrary Allegory', 20, further suggests another parallel: Hagar and Israel both receive their promises/covenant in the wilderness (unlike Abram).

<sup>27</sup> Grossman, "'Dynamic Analogies'", 395.

<sup>28</sup> Grossman, "'Dynamic Analogies'", 395.

***a) What is the purpose of the Abram-Israel analogy in the Torah Story as a whole?***

Literary analogies in Genesis provide a system of intra-connectivity; a means for transposing many individual stories into one big story. The reader who notices the Torah's literary analogies is able to see the forest for the trees, and to see the trees for what they are within the forest.

The ability to hear the echoes of God's promises to Abram in the creation mandate, for example, results in the ability to understand Abram's divine election. 'God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and conquer it"' (Gen. 1:28). The creation mandate involves blessing, seed, and the subjugation (conquest) of אֶרֶץ (the land). This three-fold mandate contains all the major provisions of God's promises to Abram: blessing, seed, and the conquest of the land. The literary analogy between Adam and Abram, in this case, provides the interpretive key for understanding Abram's election in the larger story. Adam's sin and exile resulted in a failure to implement God's plan of blessing for creation. Abram is chosen to reestablish and reassert God's blessing over all creation, to make creation 'very good' again.

The Abram-Israel analogy, therefore, serves a similar strategic purpose. It binds Israel's story with God's purposes for creation through Abram to Adam. The analogy signals to the reader that Israel's story is vitally important to God's creation purposes. In this light, the Exodus is not merely a story about Israel's national independence, but rather, it is a story about God's commitment to the whole of creation, and to all the families on the earth whom God intends to bless (cf. Exod. 1:7; Gen. 1:28).

The Abram-Israel analogy means that the Sinai Covenant, by virtue of its correspondence to the Abrahamic Covenant, is also rooted deeply in God's purposes for creation. Oddly, the universal aspects of the Abrahamic Covenant are seemingly absent from the Sinai Covenant. Rather than universal blessing, Sinai focuses on national blessings and curses strictly associated with Israel's obedience to the Sinai Covenant. We find legislation intended to keep Israel separate from the nations.

So how does the Sinai Covenant fit into the Torah's story of blessing for the whole of creation? The strong Abram-Israel analogy invites us to ask about the manner in which the two quite different

covenants function in the larger story, and to understand how the Sinai Covenant has a universal as well as national scope. The analogy draws the reader to consider the rich, broader implications of Israel's Tabernacle, priesthood, and sacrificial system for all of creation (cf. Exod. 31:17; Gen. 2:1-3). It comes as little surprise that Israel's worship system is rich in allusions to creation and to the Garden of Eden.<sup>29</sup> The Abram-Israel analogy, therefore, serves as a literary bridge binding God's concern for Israel with a concern for creation as a whole, indicating God's intention to bless the nations as well. By choosing Israel, God chooses creation.

The Abram-Israel analogy means that godly Gentiles play a significant role in the Torah's story of redemption. The analogy compels the reader to consider the significance of two Gentiles, Melchizedek and Jethro. They move onto centre stage on the eve of two of the most significant events in biblical literature: the making of the Abrahamic and the Sinai Covenants. Both individuals step onto the stage unannounced, and overshadow two of the Torah's leading characters: Abram and Moses. Both individuals bless the bless-er and the bless-ed alike, and are duly rewarded with special honour. These honoured Gentiles preemptively take their stand to praise God and bless God's people Israel as they ready themselves to enter into the redemptive covenants.<sup>30</sup>

Melchizedek and Jethro are the Torah's exemplary Gentiles who pave the way for the unexpected appearance of other honorable Gentiles in the Torah's grand finale. 'O Gentiles, cause his people to exalt' (Deut. 32:43).<sup>31</sup> Who are these Gentiles and why are they commanded to cause Israel to exult? To find answers to these questions, we must look to the larger context of the Song of Moses.<sup>32</sup> In Deuteronomy 32:21, we read:

---

<sup>29</sup> For an excellent treatment of this topic, see L. Michael Morales, *The Tabernacle Pre-Figured: Cosmic Mountain Ideology in Genesis and Exodus*, Biblical Tools and Studies 15 (Leuven: Peeters, 2012).

<sup>30</sup> Sailhamer, *Meaning*, 371.

<sup>31</sup> Of the five instances of the verb גָּן in the Hiphil, two clearly have a causative sense (Ps. 65:9; Job 29:13; see *HALOT*). The causative reading of Deut. 32:43 also clarifies the syntactical function of 'his people' in the clause. 'His people' functions as the direct object of the verb, and not as an exegetical explanation of 'Gentiles' ('O Gentiles, his people.').

<sup>32</sup> Deut. 32:1-43.



They [Israel] have made me jealous with what is no god; they have provoked me to anger with their idols. So I will make them jealous with those who are no people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.

According to this verse, Israel provokes God to jealousy by choosing and cherishing strange gods (Deut. 32:16-18). In turn, God provokes Israel to jealousy by choosing and cherishing Gentiles. It makes most sense, therefore, to identify the Gentiles in 32:43 as those referred to in 32:21, i.e., non-Israelites who are divinely chosen to provoke Israel. Surprisingly, the goal of the provocation is worship.<sup>33</sup> At this momentous occasion at the end of the Song, at the conclusion of the Torah, these Gentiles, like Melchizedek and Jethro before them, stand at Abram/Israel's side, praising God for the mighty acts of redemption.

***b) Is there significance to the point at which the two stories diverge?***

Finding meaning in something that exists is much easier than finding meaning in something that does not. Why does the analogy between Abram and Israel break down? There are a number of possibilities. I would like to suggest three.

One reason the analogy breaks down could be the meaning of Abram's new name, Abraham. Though the promise to Abram is universal in scope (Gen. 12:3), the Abram narratives are focused on the fatherhood of one seed, both in its individual as well as its collective sense (see Gen. 15:4, 13-14). In Genesis 17, however, God reveals a new and surprising aspect of the promise. Abraham is not only destined to be Israel's father, he is destined to be the father of a 'multitude of nations' as well (Gen. 17:5; see 17:16). In other words, 'Abraham not as Israel', because Abraham now represents Israel and the nations (Gen. 17:5, 16).

A second possibility has to do with a shift in focus away from Abraham that begins with Hagar in Genesis 16 as it then transitions onto Isaac in Genesis 17. Of course, this explanation cannot account for the fact that Abraham continues to be the primary focus of the story until Genesis 25:11.

There is a third, more likely explanation. The analogy between Abraham and Israel breaks down because Israel's behavior is markedly unlike Abram's after the making of the Sinai Covenant. The Hagar-

---

<sup>33</sup> This is likely how Paul understood the meaning of the Song as well (see Rom. 11:11; 15:10).

Israel analogy marks a red flag that something changes after the making of the covenant. Of particular interest is the narrative material that follows immediately after the making of the Sinai Covenant. Exodus 32 marks a major crisis in Israel's spiritual life, a crisis that becomes indicative of their spiritual condition throughout the remainder of the Primary History.<sup>34</sup> The Golden Calf breaks the analogy between Father Abraham and his children because after the making of the covenant, Israel no longer behaves like Abraham (cf. Gen. 15:5; Num. 14:11; Deut. 1:32; 9:23).

*c) What are the implications for our understanding of the NT's figural reading of some of the Torah's narratives?*

What are the implications of the Abram-Israel analogy for our understanding of the NT's figural interpretation of some of the Torah's narratives? Two passages come to mind, both of which have generated a lot of discussion because of the apparently creative ways the NT refers to the Tanakh. The first passage is Paul's interpretation of the Hagar narratives in Galatians 4:21-31. In a recent article, Matthew Emerson argues for a far more nuanced, textually sensitive reading of Paul's allegorical reading of the Hagar narratives in Genesis 16 and 21.<sup>35</sup> He points to numerous intertextual parallels linking Hagar with Israel, and argues that Paul's interpretation demonstrates a careful reading of the Torah's narratives.

Though I make no claim to know exactly how Paul came to identify Hagar as a sign pointing to the Sinai Covenant, it is remarkable to find the sudden and unexpected shift from the Abram-Israel to the Hagar-Israel analogy just after the making of the covenants. In my opinion, the timing of the breakdown of the Abram-Israel analogy and the unexpected presentation of the Hagar-Israel analogy may shed some helpful light on Paul's figural reading of the Hagar narratives. Perhaps Paul's identification of Hagar with the Sinai covenant was mediated through the story of the Golden Calf. Hagar epitomizes the fruit of Abram impatiently trying to achieve God's promises (a son) through the flesh, a sin which is repeated when Israel grew tired of waiting for God's promises (the land) while Moses tarried on the mountain (Exod. 32:1). For Paul, both Hagar and the Sinai covenant seemingly represent

---

<sup>34</sup> David Noel Freedman, *The Nine Commandments: Uncovering the Hidden Pattern of Crime and Punishment in the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 2000).

<sup>35</sup> Emerson, 'Arbitrary Allegory', 14-21.

human effort to gain God's promises through the flesh. Whether or not I have correctly understood Paul's interpretive insights, one thing is clear to me: Paul's figural reading of Genesis, a reading in which characters serve as signs (allegories) for other characters, is quite at home in a body of literature where literary analogy is essential to its compositional strategy.

The second passage I want to consider is Matthew's figural interpretation of Hosea 11:1 in Matthew 2:15. One of the implications of this study is the importance of literary analogy for our understanding of the meaning of the Torah's narratives. The Torah's narratives, by design, have a figural force. It is crucial to note that Matthew 2:15, though possibly a citation of Hosea 11:1, is also a clear allusion to the Exodus narrative. This is not Matthew's only allusion to the Exodus narrative. Matthew 2 belongs to a series of many individual stories which have been joined together to form an extended Jesus-Israel/Moses analogy.<sup>36</sup> Matthew 2:19-21 is a nearly verbatim quotation of Exodus 4:19-20 (LXX/OG).

### Jesus-Moses Analogy

Now when Herod died, behold and angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, 'Get up. Take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel. For dead are those who sought the life of the child.' So he got up, took the child and his mother, and he went to the land of Israel (τεθνήκασιν γὰρ οἱ ζητοῦντες τὴν ψυχὴν τοῦ παιδίου. ὁ δὲ ἐγερθεὶς παρέλαβεν τὸ παιδίον καὶ τὴν μητέρα αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰσηλθεν εἰς γῆν Ἰσραήλ). (Matt. 2:19-21)

Now after many days, *the king of Egypt died*. And the Lord said to Moses in Midian, 'Go! Depart to Egypt, for dead are all those who sought your life.' And Moses took his wife and his children, and put them on the donkeys, and returned to Egypt (τεθνήκασιν γὰρ πάντες οἱ ζητοῦντές σου τὴν ψυχὴν. ἀναλαβὼν δὲ Μωσῆς τὴν γυναῖκα καὶ τὰ παιδιά ἀνεβίβασεν αὐτὰ ἐπὶ τὰ ὑποζύγια καὶ ἐπέστρεψεν εἰς Αἴγυπτον). (Exod. 4:19-20 LXX).<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> For an excellent treatment of Matthew's use of typology, see Allison, *The New Moses*. The Abram-Israel analogy further demonstrates that biblical analogies can be quite extensive, unifying many individual stories into a larger whole.

<sup>37</sup> John W. Wevers, ed., *Exodus*, Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum, Auctoritate Academiae Scientiarum Gottingensis editum, 2,1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991).

In fact, Matthew 2 is brimming with other allusions to the Exodus narrative: Herod-Pharaoh, the Magi-midwives, Jesus-Moses, etc. What is more, in the verses immediately following Exodus 4:19-20 (the passage to which Matthew alludes) we find an explicit identification of Israel as God's son.

Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the Lord, "Israel is my firstborn son, and I say to you, 'Let my son go that he may serve me.' If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son"' (Exod. 4:22-23).

Matthew's strategic allusion to Exodus 4:19-20 was surely intended to 'place the reader within [the] field of whispered or unstated correspondences'<sup>38</sup> with Exodus 4:22-23. For the Evangelist, the Exodus tells two stories simultaneously, a tale of two sons coming out of Egypt.<sup>39</sup>

Matthew 2 also finds its place within a more extensive Jesus-Israel/Moses analogy. In Matthew 2, God brings Jesus out of Egypt. In Matthew 3, God brings Jesus through the waters of the Jordan. In Matthew 4, God brings Jesus to the wilderness to be tested. Matthew's three temptations follow the exact order of Israel's wilderness temptations, up to and including the sin of the Golden Calf, where Israel bows down and worships a false god, something Jesus refuses to do. In Matthew 5-7, Jesus goes up a mountain to give his Torah to his disciples. Finally, in Matthew 9:36 we find an allusion to Numbers 27:17, wherein Moses delegates his authority to Joshua to go and conquer the Promised Land. It is likely not coincidental that in Matthew 9-10, Jesus also delegates his authority to the disciples, who are then commanded to go only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt. 10:6). Matthew 2-10<sup>40</sup> follows Israel's story in Exodus, and does so by the use of shared language and common themes. Matthew's quotation of Hosea 11:1 is appropriate because it cogently articulates the essence of his understanding of the entire Exodus narrative as a sign to the sons.

---

<sup>38</sup> Hays, *Echoes*, 20.

<sup>39</sup> Because of the Jesus-Israel analogy, scholars frequently refer to Jesus as the 'True Israel', i.e., that Jesus replaces Israel. Given the fact that Jesus came to save his people from their sins (Matt. 1:21), perhaps the Jesus-Israel analogy is not meant to show that Jesus replaces Israel, but serves as their greatest representative. For this reason, 'Truest Israelite' might be more in line with the purposes of the analogy.

<sup>40</sup> Matt. 1 functions much like Gen., i.e., a genealogical trail that leads us from Adam to a king from the tribe of Judah.

How did Matthew come to see Jesus's story in the Exodus narrative? First, the contents of Matthew's Gospel points to an author who knew the Torah well and would likely have been aware of the parallels we have highlighted here. Though he may not have been aware of the axiom "the deeds of the fathers are a sign to the sons" (מעשי אבות סימן לבנים) it is clear he was reading the Torah's narratives as signposts for the future. Second, Matthew's reference to the star (Matt. 2:1-2, 9) points to the Evangelist's familiarity with the Balaam narrative (see Num. 24:17), where we find an analogy between Israel's exodus with that of Israel's king (cf. Num. 23:21-24; 24:7-9, 17).

Because literary analogy is a key feature of the Torah's compositional strategy, I find Matthew's interpretation of the Exodus narrative to be remarkably consistent with the Torah's own inner network of literary analogies. Matthew relates the story of Jesus to the Exodus narrative in a manner that shines light on the rich tapestry of the Torah's potential meanings.

#### 4. Conclusion

Though Ramban may have overstated his case when he said, 'Everything that happened to the fathers is a sign to the sons', in the case of Abram it is not so far from the truth. Almost everything that happened to Abram did in fact happen to Israel. By means of rare words, ungrammaticalities, and common themes, the Torah depicts Abram and Israel's story simultaneously. Abram's story is Israel's story in a nutshell.

##### Summary of the Abram-Israel Analogy

Scattering from a City of Bricks to the Land of God	Gen. 11:1-9	Exod. 5
Exodus from Egypt	Gen. 12:10–13:4	Gen. 43–Exod. 14
Lack of Resources Occasions a Conflict	Gen. 13:5-18	Exod. 15:22–17:7
Victorious Battle over the Amalekites	Gen. 14:1-16	Exod. 17:8-16
Appearance of a Gentile Priest	Gen. 14:18-20	Exod. 18
Making of the Covenant	Gen. 15	Exod. 19–24

These stories have in common all the major elements of the plot. Abram's story is Israel's; Israel's story is Abram's story, but not in every way. The literary analogy breaks down after the making of the covenant, about the time Abram receives his new name.

I have presented my thoughts on the meaning of the extensive literary analogy between Abram and Israel: that it is designed, above all, to create a metanarrative wherein many stories unite into a single story that tells how the once very good creation will become very good again, through Adam, through Abram, through Israel. I have offered an explanation as to why it breaks down after the making of the covenant: that the Golden Calf narrative is the source and cause of this breakdown. Israel's behavior is radically unlike Abram's after their encounter with God at Mount Sinai. Abram passes the divine test with unflinching obedience and is commended as one who fears the Lord, a man of faith and credited with righteousness,<sup>41</sup> while Israel quickly turns aside to worship other gods and the wilderness generation comes to be identified as a stiff-necked and rebellious people.<sup>42</sup> Unlike Abram, they lack righteousness because they do not believe and do not obey God's voice. In short, the analogy between Abram and Israel is no longer fitting when Israel's stops walking in their father's shoes.

Finally, I argued that attention to the Torah's own use of literary analogy offers a helpful vantage point for viewing the NT's usage of Pentateuchal narratives that are typically regarded as far removed from the literal sense of the original passages: Paul's interpretation of the Hagar narratives in Galatians 4 and Matthew's interpretation of the Exodus narrative. These NT passages are shown to be remarkably sensitive and careful readings of the Torah's story when seen through the lens of the Torah's own inner matrix of literary analogies.

---

<sup>41</sup> Gen. 15:6, 22:1, 22:12, 26:5.

<sup>42</sup> Exod. 32:9, 33:3, 5, 34:9; Deut. 9:6, 13, 23, 10:16; 31:27