Narrative *Toledot* Formulae in Genesis: The Case of Heaven and Earth, Noah, and Isaac

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INTRODUCTION

The *toledot* formula, occurring eleven times in the book of Genesis[1] (2:4; 5:1;[2] 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1; 36:9; 37:2) is the book's most salient literary marker, delineating its sections and shaping its structure.[3] The formula serves as a heading which marks

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[1] All references are to the book of Genesis, unless otherwise noted.

[2] The formula in 5:1 is slightly anomalous in its formulation: "This is the book of the *toledot* of Adam," rather than: "These are the *toledot*." Therefore, some scholars do not include it in the *toledot* list. See, for example, S. R. Driver, *The Book of Genesis* (6th ed.; WC; London: Methuen, 1904), ii.

[3] Based on its appearances, the book can be divided thus: creation of heaven and earth (1:1–2:3); from heaven and earth to Adam (2:4–5:1); from Adam to Noah (5:1–6:9); from Noah to Noah's sons (6:9–10:1); from Noah's sons to Shem (10:1–11:10); from Shem to Terah (11:10–27); from Terah to Ishmael (11:27–25:12); from Ishmael to Isaac (25:12–19); from Isaac to Esau (25:19–36:1); from Esau to Jacob (36:1–37:2); from Jacob (37:2) onward. For thematic titles, see M. A. Sweeney, "Genesis in the Context of Jewish Thought," in C. A. Evans, J. N. Lohr, and D. L. Petersen (eds.), *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 660. The relationship between sections is discussed at length in research and different proposals have been made regarding the structure of Genesis based on the formulae: see J. Scharbert, "Der Sinn der Toledot-Formel in der Preisterschrift," in H. J. Stoebe, J. J. Stamm, and E. Jenni (eds.), *Wort, Gebot, Glaube. Beiträge zur Thelogie des Alten Testaments. Walter Eichrodt zum 80 Geburtstag* (ATANT, 59; Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1970), 45–56; K. Koch, "Die Toledot-Formeln als Strukturprinzip des Buches Genesis," in S. Beyerle, G. Mayer, and H. Strauß (eds.), *Recht und Ethos im Alten Testament—Gestalt und Wirkung: Festschrift für Horst Seebas zum 65. Geburstag*, (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1999), 183–91; B. K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 18; M. A. Thomas, *These are the Generations: Identity, Covenant and the Toledot Formula* (New York: T&T Clark, 2011), 71–73.

a transition to a new subject,[4] or, more precisely, as a connective heading that opens a new unit concerning a familiar figure and the descendants of that figure.[5] From a conceptual perspective, the *toledot* formula generates increasing focus on the chosen line, like a camera zooming in on a particular subject. This is achieved by transitioning from a genealogical list of humankind at large (10:1) to genealogical lists and narratives about the chosen line—the sons of Shem (11:10), the family of Abraham (11:27), Isaac, Jacob and Joseph (25:19; 37:2), which are interspersed with the genealogical lists of those who were not chosen (25:12; 36:1, 9).[6]

A careful survey of this formula determines that each occurrence can be categorized into one of two types, based on its context: either as the opening of a genealogical list of the father it mentions (5:1; 10:1; 11:10; 25:12; 36:1; 36:9), or as the opening of a narrative passage (2:4; 6:9; 11:27; 25:19; 37:2).[7] In the former case,

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[4] The formula "these are the *toledot*" is a nominative clause, described by Andersen as a declarative verbless clause, which therefore serves as a heading for what follows (F. I. Andersen, *The Hebrew Verbless Clause in the Pentateuch* [JBL Monograph Series, 14; Nashville: Abingdon, 1970], 32). Waltke and O'Connor define this type as an identification clause because of the use of a pronoun that hints to the second person plural, "these" (B. K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990], 130–31, 307). See also T. Stordalen, "Genesis 2,4: Restudying a *locus classicus*," *ZAW* 104 (1992), 163–77 (171); Thomas, *Generations*, 37–38. Even though most scholars hold that the formula is a heading, some suggest that it serves as a conclusion and summary. This was proposed by P. J. Wiseman, *Clues to Creation in Genesis* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1977), 35–45, and adopted and developed by R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (London: Tyndale Press, 1970), 543–53. This view was rejected by most scholars, as it contradicts the text: see V. P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 8–11.

[5] Thus, for example, the *toledot* of Adam (5:1) list the descendants of Adam, who is familiar to the reader from the previous chapters. The *toledot* of Noah (6:9) introduce a new unit, but Noah himself is mentioned before (5:29, 32; 6:8). The *toledot* of the sons of Noah (10:1) describe the descendants of the sons of Noah, who are already mentioned in the flood narrative (6:10, 18; 7:7, 13; 8:16, 18; 9:1, 8, 18–27), and so on in the rest of the formulae. See D. Carr, "Βίβλος γενέσεως Revisited: A Synchronic Analysis of Patterns in Genesis as Part of the Torah," *ZAW* 110 (1998), 159–72 (163–64); K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26* (NAC; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 33–34; Thomas, *Generations*, 31.

[6] Driver (*Genesis*, ii) raised this possibility, and many have developed it. See, for example, T. D. Alexander, "Genealogies, Seed, and the Compositional Unity of Genesis," *TynBul* 44 (1993), 255–70 (259); Thomas, *Generations*, 74; D. Carr, "Genesis," in M. D. Coogan (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Books of the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011) 1:316–34 (323).

[7] This distinction has been made by many, including: B. S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 145; S. Tengström, *Die Toledotformel und die literarische Sruktur der priesterlichen*

when the formula is followed by a genealogical list, there is full compatibility between the phrase's literal meaning and its function. This is because the basic meaning of the word *toledot* is "children" so its natural function is to introduce a list of the father's descendants.[8] However, when the formula is followed by a story rather than a genealogical list, the word *toledot* cannot be easily interpreted as "descendants." This difficulty is evident in the many translations proposed for this phrase in these cases.[9]

One method of resolving this problem is to claim that when the formula introduces a narrative passage rather than a list, the ensuing story nonetheless records what befalls the *sons of the father* mentioned in the formula, so that in a sense, the original meaning of the word, "descendants," is retained. This approach, accepted by many scholars, is perhaps best summarized by Thomas in his comprehensive study of Genesis' *toledot* formulae: "despite its semantic ambiguity, the formula guides the reader to a passage about the descendants of the father it mentions."[10]

In this article, I wish to reexamine the claim that a *toledot* formula which opens a narrative account in Genesis necessarily serves as the heading of a passage about the *sons* of the specified father. I will show that this rule applies only in certain instances, and is not the case in Gen 2:4; 6:9; and 25:19.

Reconsidering the meaning of the word *toledot*, I will propose a new approach for understanding the formula's function in these cases. My main argument is that this formula serves as a title for a narrative passage about an important figure in the chosen line, who may be the specified *father*, his *sons*, or *both*.

The new understanding of this formula's function in these instances will illuminate issues pertaining to the text that follows

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Erweiterungsschicht im Pentateuch (Coniectanea Biblica; Old Testament Series, 17; Uppsala: CWK Gleerup, 1981), 19–25. They disagree on the classification of the *toledot* of Adam (5:1) and Shem (11:10) which Tengström defines as a narrative, while Childs contends that they are genealogical. For further opinions regarding this issue, see Thomas, *Generations,* 56–59.

[8] The word *toledot* is a noun that stems from the root *yld.* See *HALOT* 4:1699.

[9] The Septuagint translates the word *toledot* as γένεσις in every case. Zipor proposes that this means "formation," which is the source of the book's name in Greek tradition. See M. A. Zipor, *The Septuagint Version of the Book of Genesis* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2005), 78 [Hebrew]. Tg. Onq translated תולדת throughout the book, and the same translation appeared in the Syr. version. Modern translations, in contrast, are inconsistent: the NKJV, for example, translates the term as "genealogy" each time, with the exception of 2:4 and 37:2, where "this is the history" was used. The JPS translation translates "the story of heaven and earth" in 2:4 and "this is the story of Isaac" in 25:19. The NRSV uses "generation" in 2:4 and "descendants" in the other occurrences with the exception of 37:2, where it uses "this is the story of the family of Jacob."

[10] Thomas, *Generations*, 23–24. Similarly, see Stordalen, "Genesis 2,4," 171; Carr, "Patterns," 163–64; Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 38.

them, and in the process I will address (1) the understanding of the internal tensions within the Flood narrative; (2) the question of demarcation of the Isaac narrative within the ancestral cycles; (3) the fact that ch. 1 is not part of the general *toledot* pattern of the book of Genesis.

DO THE FORMULAE THAT OPEN NARRATIVE PASSAGES IN GENESIS INTRODUCE THE SONS OF THE SPECIFIED FATHER?

As mentioned above, *toledot* formulae that introduce narrative material in Genesis appear in 2:4; 6:9; 11:27; 25:19; and 37:2. The *toledot* of Terah (11:27) and Jacob (37:2) can be considered introductory formulae to narratives that chiefly concern their sons. After mentioning Terah, the story clearly focuses on Abraham, for Terah's death is mentioned soon after (11:32).[11] After the formula of Jacob (37:2), Joseph is immediately introduced: "these are the *toledot* of Jacob Joseph, being seventeen years old," אלה תלדות יעקב יוסף בן שבע עשרה שנה and the story that unfolds focuses on the figure of Joseph and all that befalls him.[12]

In these cases, therefore, the word *toledot* retains the meaning "descendants" even though what ensues is not a genealogical list but a story; the narrative formula indeed seems to introduce a story about the sons of the father mentioned.

However, in the other narrative formulae, it is difficult to claim that what follows focuses upon the sons of the specified father:

1. The *toledot* formula in 2:4 refers to the heavens and earth, which are not human entities capable of reproduction, and the text that follows focuses chiefly on the creation of man. Many therefore interpret this phrase in a metaphorical sense, explaining the works of creation as the "children" of the cosmos.[13] This understanding is certainly

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[11] Although the text devotes two verses to Terah himself (11:31–32), the first (11:31) is concerned with Terah's bringing *Abraham's* family to Haran, while the second (11:32) mentions his *death*, cueing his exit.

[12] Jacob features several times in the Joseph narrative (e.g., 46:1–7; 47:7–10, 27–28; 48:3–6; 49:1, 29–33; 50:12–13) but they are an integral part of the story of Joseph and his brothers. For example, 46:1–7 describes Jacob's descent to Egypt, but it is directly related to Joseph's story, as the text emphasizes that Jacob goes to Egypt to see him (45:28), as his sons report that he still lives (45:26–27). Even Jacob's revelation on the way to Egypt (46:2–4) is related to Joseph; God promises Jacob that "Joseph's own hand shall close your eyes," (46:4) that is, Joseph will be present when he dies, fulfilling his desire to see his son before his death. Beginning with v. 5, the focus shifts from Jacob to his sons, and the verbs mostly relate to them and not to their father: "They also took their livestock . . . and they came into Egypt" (46:6).

[13] This concept was already raised in *Genesis Rabbah*, the Theodor-Albeck edition, 12:7, as well as in modern scholarship. See B. Jacob, *The*

possible, and is even supported by the description of man being formed from dust of the earth (2:7). However, this approach lends a certain creative power to heaven and earth in a sense that contradicts the theological message that God is the sole creator; and the concept that heaven and earth are the "parents" of the other works of creation is unprecedented in the Bible.[14] According to this biblical paradigm, it makes sense to assume that in this case, the formula does not serve to introduce a narrative about the children of the father it features.

2. It is difficult to claim that the story following Noah's *toledot* formula (6:9) focuses on Noah's sons; even though their names are mentioned in the next verse, the ensuing narrative focuses on Noah himself, the father mentioned in the formula.

3. While the narrative following Isaac's *toledot* formula (25:19) begins with the story of Jacob and Esau, ch. 26:1–33 relates events that befall Isaac alone, without any mention of his sons, so that his own story is effectively told under the heading of his own *toledot* formula.[15]

First Book of The Bible: Genesis (trans. E. J. Jacob and W. Jacob of the first ed. 1934; New York: Ktav, 1974), 14; Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, 151; Stordalen, "Genesis 2,4," 175; R. Hendel, *Remembering Abraham: Culture, Memory, and History in the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 35; Thomas, *Generations,* 23–24.

[14] The perception of God as the creator of everything, including heaven and earth, is expressed in the Bible in other places besides Genesis. See, for example, Isa 51:8–16; Ps 104. Job explicitly states that the forces of nature have no parent besides God: "Has the rain a father, or who has begotten the drops of dew, from whose womb did the ice come forth, and who has given birth to the hoarfrost of heaven" (Job 38:28–29). Carr ("Patterns," 166 n. 27) notes that in contrast to the Bible, the texts of other cultures suggest that the heavens and earth are the procreators of the other creations.

[15] As mentioned above (n. 12), a similar phenomenon seems to exist in ch. 46 as well, where Jacob's deeds are described under the heading of Jacob's *toledot* that introduce Joseph's story, but there are two essential differences between the chapters: (a) In ch. 46, the story is directly, chronologically, and circumstantially related to the chapter before, and is an integral part of the Joseph narrative, which ends in his reconciliation with his brothers and Jacob's family's descent to Egypt. Therefore, despite the fact that the first verses (1–7) describe *Jacob's* descent to Egypt, they are inextricably related to Joseph—see in detail above. (b) A large part of ch. 46 is not narrative—it relates the names of Jacob's family who descend to Egypt, and can therefore be considered a summarizing chapter. In contrast, ch. 26:1–33 does not mention Jacob and Esau at all, only Isaac, and the events are neither chronologically nor circumstantially related to its adjacent chapters. Moreover, the chapter is purely narrative and focuses on the events that befall the father Isaac. It therefore seems that the chapters play a different role within their narrative frameworks.

DIACHRONIC EXPLANATIONS

As the *toledot* formula is generaly attributed to P,[16] diachronic stud-ies focus on the process of this source's integration with other materials during the course of the book's redaction. Most of this research is based on the premise that the *toledot* formula originally served as a heading for a genealogical list, characteristic of P sources.[17]

Carr, however, develops the claim that the formula was not an integral part of the priestly source in every case, and proposes a different explanation for the formulae's incompatibility with the material following them. He argues that the internal redaction pro-cess of the P source, as well as its integration with the other sources in Genesis, resulted in the formula's use as a heading for passages that did not suit the phrase in its original sense. In the case of the *toledot* formula of 2:4, he explains that the redactor incorporated it during the process of combining the priestly material with non-priestly material in order to connect the priestly creation narrative (1:1–2:3) to earlier material (2:4–4:26), thus extending the genealogy in ch. 5 (Pre P) backwards.[18] In regard to Noah's formula, he sug-gests that P extended ch. 5's genealogical system forward in order to incorporate the priestly version of the flood narrative, found in chs. 6–9.[19]

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[16] Despite scholars' mutual use of the term "P," the characterization and dating of the P source is given to heated debate, and scholarly con-ceptualization of the source has changed over the years. For an overview of research, see B. J. Schwartz, "The Torah—Its Five Books and Four Documents," in Z. Talshir (ed.), *The Literature of the Hebrew Bible: Intro-ductions and Studies* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi Press, 2011), 204–9 [Hebrew]; R. G. Kratz, "The Pentateuch in Current Research: Consensus and Debate," in T. B. Dozeman, K. Schmid, and B. J. Schwartz (eds.), *The Pentateuch: International Perspectives on Current Research* (FAT, 78; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 31–61.

[17] Budde and von Rad each propose a direction that serves as a major approach in research. Budde claims that according to P, the *toledot* formula was originally appropriate and consistent, serving only as an introduction to genealogical lists, but during the course of redaction it was adapted to other materials in Genesis, distorting its original meaning. See K. Budde, "Ellä toledoth," *ZAW* 34 (1914), 241–53, in line with his general approach that P is a single author rather than redactor, but cf. J. Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis* (2nd ed.; ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1930), 11, 40. Von Rad proposes that the P source drew upon an independent "toledoth book," and as P is a compilation of different sources, P itself is inconsistent (G. von Rad, *Genesis* [OTL; trans. J. H. Marks; London: SCM, 1963], 70). According to him (ibid*.,* 126) the case of Noah's formula is a striking example of the inconsistent use P made of the "toledoth book"—in this case, he argues, the *toledot* formula almost completely lost its original meaning due to the combination of the "toledoth book" with the flood narrative.

[18] Carr, "Patterns," 169.

[19] Ibid., 169–70. Carr points out a gradual process in which the *toledot*

Diachronic explanations regarding Isaac's toledot formula usually revolve around the explanation that the redactor's placement of ch. 26 was erroneous, as the chapter interrupts the story of Jacob and Esau, and should have been placed after 25:12.[20]

While theories of this kind solve different tensions in the text, they also raise fundamental questions regarding the redactional considerations of the insertion of the *toledot* formulae in certain locations. According to Carr, for example, the *toledot* formula in 2:4 was not an integral part of the P source, but was added by a later redactor. If so, then we might have expected the formula to have been placed at the opening of the book of Genesis (1:1) in order to include the entire book within a genealogical framework.[21] Another question might address why the redactor did not place Noah's formula at the beginning of ch. 6, so that J's introduction to the Flood narrative would also be included in the general *toledot* structure of the book.[22] The addition of this formula in this location generates redundant repetition of Noah's genealogy, as well as incompatibility between the formula and the passage that follows it.

The placement of ch. 26 is also problematic: why wasn't the chapter relating Isaac's story placed before the beginning of Jacob and Esau's narrative, so that the *toledot* formula in 25:19 could introduce the complete, uninterrupted story of Isaac's sons?[23]

It therefore seems that attributing the problem to redactors rather than authors does not fully resolve many questions relating

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structure was first extended by P. Only afterward was the formula used to connect the priestly material with the non-priestly material by a later redactor. See idem, 170–71.

[20] S. R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (9th ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1913), 16. Similarly H. Gunkel, *Genesis* (trans. M. E. Biddle of the third ed. 1910; Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997), 287, 293–94; Skinner, *Genesis,* 363–68. Von Rad (*Genesis*, 270) emphasizes that the ancient traditions of Isaac were incorporated into the text without taking the larger patriarchal narrative cycle into editorial consideration.

[21] While Carr claims that the appearance of the formula in 2:4 is consistent with its character as a formula that introduces a passage about a figure who has already been mentioned in the text (in this case, Adam), this results in chs. 1–2:3 being excluded from the *toledot* structure (Carr, "Patterns," 164).

[22] According to diachronic readings the formula introduces non-priestly material (as in 25:19).

[23] Woudstra poses similar questions in his article about the *toledot* formula: "Why did these supposed editors insert the phrases where they did? Why presuppose that these editors lacked the necessary insight and consistency?" (M. H. Woudstra, "Toledot of the Book of Genesis and their Redemptive-Historical Significance," *CTJ* 5 [1970], 184–89 [186]). In a different context, Hamilton (*Genesis 1–17*, 154) claims that it is illogical to claim that the redactor would iron out the confusion generated by the fusion of different sources but not touch mistakes that were liable to confuse the reader.

to the placement and nature of the *toledot* formulae of 2:4, 6:9, and 25:19.

LITERARY EXPLANATIONS

Literary interpretations of the book of Genesis pay little attention to the fact that the *toledot* formula that opens a narrative account does not always introduce a passage that concerns the sons of the father it mentions. Stordalen proposes that in Noah's case, the *toledot* formula only introduces the next verse (6:10), which mentions the names of his sons, but emphasizes that this is an exceptional rather than typical instance concerning the *toledot* formulae.[24] Waltke also notes the Noah formula, but explains that the entire flood narrative comes under the *toledot* formula of 5:1, so that Noah's formula can be understood as the introduction to his own story within the genealogical list of Seth.[25] This explanation is somewhat contrived as the *toledot* formula that opens the flood narrative in 6:9 clearly serves to distinguish between these units, and Waltke's explanation contradicts the formula's obvious role as the introduction to a new passage.[26] Thomas argues that Noah's formula is followed by the names of his sons, thus preserving the genealogical aspect of the formula, but he also admits that in this case, it does not introduce a narrative about the sons but rather the story of the father himself, and is thus a stretch of the semantic range of the term *toledot*.[27]

The claim that the term is "stretched" to the extent of incompatibility between the formula and its presumed function, casts doubt on the theory that the formula always introduces a narrative passage about the son/s of the father mentioned. Moreover, these positions reflect the premise that the narrative formulae play an exclusive role throughout Genesis, though this is not necessarily the case.

The different contexts of the *toledot* formulae may reflect that the word *toledot* has multiple meanings rather than just one, and in any case does not serve a single function throughout the book. If this premise is correct, then a different explanation pertaining to

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[24] Stordalen, "Genesis 2,4," 171. Stordalen also raises this possibility: "Or perhaps Noah's acts his תולדות ('product') in a very broad sense?" idem, n. 26.

[25] Waltke, *Genesis*, 18, 24. Similarly, Wilson proposes that the postponement of numbering Noah's years until 9:28–29 designates the flood narrative as an extension of Seth's genealogy (R. R Wilson, *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World* [YNER, 7; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977], 161).

[26] In this context, note that while Noah's formula clearly introduces the flood narrative, the previous verses (6:5–8) provide an additional introduction to the story, which also acts as a conclusion to the previous section. See G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15* (WBC, 1; Waco: Word Books, 1987), 143; Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 339.

[27] Thomas, *Generations*, 24.

the relationship between the narrative *toledot* formulae and its adjacent material is required; one that explains its function where there is apparent incompatibility between the word *toledot* and the material that follows it.

A NEW PROPOSAL

I wish to present a literary explanation for the affinity between the formulae of 2:4; 6:9; and 25:19 and the narratives following them. This approach is based on the assumption that understanding the meaning of the text can be achieved through analyzing the final form of the textual design, reflecting its overall objective.[28]

Nowadays, many scholars recognize that even if different traditions comprise the book of Genesis, its composition is not arbitrary; rather, its text has been painstakingly arranged to convey countless ideas,[29] and the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.[30] Therefore, a careful exploration of the text in its final form has the power to uncover its meaning. Even textual tensions previously perceived as redactive failures are now considered part of

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[28] In the words of Y. Zakovitch (*The Life of Samson [Judges 13–16]*, [Jerusalem: Magnes, 1982], 13 [Hebrew]): "The meaning of the text is created and expressed only in its *formal design*, [italics in the original] and only close examination of this design can result in uncovering the message of the literary creation." Others favor this approach, such as J. P. Fokkelman, for example. This approach is largely based on New Criticism, which interprets the text from within the text without relying on external information.

[29] Such an approach has already been proposed by M. D. Cassuto, in his article "*Shirat HaAlila B'Yisrael*," *Knesset* 8 (1943), 121–42 [Hebrew], which argues that many ancient traditional narratives make up the book of Genesis, but only those that were consistent with the work's viewpoints were selected, and subjected to editing and adaptation to the work's theological outlook. See also his commentary on Genesis: M. D. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis* (4th ed.; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1965), 1–5 [Hebrew]. See also N. M. Sarna, *Understanding Genesis* (Heritage of Biblical Israel, 1; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1966), xxv, who perceives different components in Genesis but ascribes more importance to their final form. The same is true of Zakovitch. He demonstrates this through noting the implementation of the principle of reward and punishment in biblical narrative; in the judgment of the deeds of certain figures; and in the thematic design of entire books, such as Judges (Y. Zakovitch, "Story Versus History," *PWCJS* 8 [1981], 47–60). As recognition of the thematic unity of large bodies of traditional text increases, the argument that these works are the result of sophisticated redaction ultimately supports the argument that these texts were composed by a single author, as Barton describes in J. Barton, *Reading the Old Testament* (2nd ed.; Louisville: John Knox, 1996), 56–58; and similarly E. Assis, *From Moses to Joshua and from the Miraculous to the Ordinary* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2005), 3–4 [Hebrew].

[30] P. J. Harland, *The Value of Human Life: A Study of the Story of the Flood (Genesis 6–9)* (VTSup, 64; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 6–19.

the work's literary design. For example, the placement of ch. 26 has been explained as part of a chiastic arrangement of the Jacob cycle.[31] Similarly, profound thematic connections indicating unity and inner cohesion have been found between different parts of the book that were once considered completely disparate.[32] Affinity between genealogical lists and narrative passages in the book has also been addressed in various literary studies.[33]

While these explanations do not solve all the tensions and difficulties in the book of Genesis in general, or in regard to the narrative *toledot* formula in particular, they make an important contribution to their resolution, and this is the main objective of my study.

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[31] See M. Fishbane, *Text and Texture: Close Readings of Selected Biblical Texts* (New York: Schoeken Books, 1979), 40–62 (initially published as "Composition and Structure in the Jacob Cycle [Gen. 25:19–35:22]," *JJS* 26 [1975], 15–38). In the context of Jacob's narrative cycle, Fishbane (*Text and Texture*, 42, 46–48) suggests that chs. 26 and 34 serve as interludes which generate suspense in the Jacob Cycle. This structure was adopted by many, including Rendsburg, who developed it further (G. A. Rendsburg, *The Redaction of Genesis* [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1986], 53–54).

[32] Rendsburg (*Redaction,* 26) points to the literary structure of each section of Genesis, which testifies to a single anthologist for each story, and indicates the possibility of a single redactor of the entire book. See also B. Dahlberg, "On Recognizing the Unity of Genesis," *TD* 24 (1976), 360–67; R. L. Cohn, "Narrative Structure and Canonical Perspective in Genesis," *JSOT* 25 (1983), 3–16. A recent article of Polak demonstrates the similarities and parallelism of the Abraham cycle and the Jacob cycle: F. Polak, "Oral Substratum, Language Usage, and Thematic Flow in the Abraham-Jacob Narrative," in B. B. Schmidt (ed.), *Contextualizing Israel's Sacred Writings: Ancient Literacy, Orality, and Literary Production* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 217–38 (219–20).

[33] For example Robinson claims that the lists and the narrative material complete each other from a literary perspective in many aspects. For example, the genealogical list reinforces the idea of order and continuity, while the story raises tension in this respect. In general, the genealogical lists lead the theme of order reflected in the creation of the world in a "deterministic" sense, in contrast to the tension of the narratives that depict human choices, which generates movement between the will of God and human freedom. See R. B. Robinson, "Literary Function of the Genealogies of Genesis," *CBQ* 48 (1986), 595–608. A slightly different nuance is proposed by T. D. Andersen, "Genealogical Prominence and the Structure of Genesis," in R. D. Bergen (ed.), *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics* (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1994), 242–66 (263). Steinberg applies Todorov's approach and shows that the *toledot* formula is inherent to the patriarchal narrative (11:27; 25:19; 37:2) because they signal imbalance within the family, cast doubt upon the question of continuation, and introduce a story that ultimately leads to balance and solution (N. A. Steinberg, "The Genealogical Framework of the Family Stories in Genesis," *Semeia* 46 [1989], 41–50).

My explanation is based on a philological analysis of the word *toledot*, which posits that the word has several different meanings which anticipate the formula's multiple functions. Besides this philological analysis, I will base my claim on the literary design of the relevant formulae and a contour analysis of the stories that follow.

TOLEDOT: A PHILOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

While the word *toledot* is derived from the root *yld*, and means "descendants" or "generations," this is less easily asserted when the formula is followed by narrative, as we saw above. Medieval commentators already sensed this and proposed different interpretations in these instances. Ibn Ezra claimed that in the cases of Noah and Jacob, *toledot* means "chronicles": "These are the *toledot* as in chronicles, like the expression 'what the day may bear'— מה ילד יום(Prov 27:1)."[34] Reference to a verse from Proverbs illuminates the borrowed meaning of the word *toledot* as the chronological events that befall a person, similar to metaphoric use of the verb ילד, to bear, to describe future events.[35]

Several modern scholars have made similar claims. Wilson, for example, argues that the initial meaning of the word *toledot* is "descendants," but as it is associated with continuation and continuity, it can sometimes be interpreted in a narrative or historical sense, which is the case when the formula is followed by a narrative passage rather than a genealogical list.[36] Chamiel suggests interpreting the word as "events and the life and times of the sons, grandsons, descendants of the father or the head of the clan."[37] As mentioned, most modern translators follow this path, translating some instances of the word *toledot* as "children," and others as "story" or "family history."[38]

It therefore seems that the word *toledot* has two main definitions: "genealogical descendants" and "chronicles"/"story," which are semantically related through the concept of "consequences" and events that follow each other. The well-known phenomenon of words with multiple meanings can be explained as part of the process of language development involving semantic changes of a

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[34] Ibn Ezra on Gen 6:9, *Mikraot Gedolot HaKeter* (ed. M. Cohen; Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University, 1992), and similarly in his commentary to 37:2. For a similar interpretation, see Radak and Joseph ben Isaac Bekhor Shor on Gen 6:9, *Mikraot Gedolot HaKeter*.

[35] See A. Hurvitz, *Proverbs 11–31* (Mikra Leyisrael; Tel-Aviv: Am Oved/Jerusalem: Magnes, 2013), 521 [Hebrew].

[36] R. W. Wilson, "Genealogies," *ABD* 2:929–32 (930).

[37] H. Hamiel, "*Toledot*," in A. Biram et al. (eds.), *The Book of Neiger: Bible Studies in Memory of David Neiger* (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1959), 7–18 [Hebrew].

[38] See n. 9 above.

particular word.[39] These changes may be attributed to linguistic, historical, social, and psychological factors, among others,[40] and are not usually coincidental—rather, they are related to similarity or proximity between the signified or signifiers of the word, as seems to be the case here.[41]

Such an explanation is proposed by Hamilton, who claims that the word *toledot* stems from the concept of "reproduction" but with time, took on the less specific meaning of "product," and even evolved to mean "historical consequences."[42] According to the HALOT dictionary, the word *toledot* originally implied reproduction and parenthood, but linguistically evolved to mean relatives, and then the historical significance of a family.[43] It is worth noting that in Modern Hebrew, the word *toledot* often refers to the "chronicles" or "events," [קורות] or to "the history of X."[44]

This development can also be understood through Roland Barthes' theory of the creation of "myths" in language. According to Barthes, a "myth" is "a second-order semiological system. That which is a sign (namely the associative total of a concept and an image) in the first system, becomes a mere signifier in the second."[45] The new signifier, according to Barthes, generates a new sign, which does not cancel out the previous sign, but rather encompasses its meaning while simultaneously expressing a new meaning which is "*already* complete, it postulates a kind of knowledge, a past, a memory, a comparative order of facts, ideas, decisions. . . But the essential point in all this is that the form does not suppress the meaning, it only impoverishes it, puts it at a distance, it holds it at one's disposal."[46]

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[39] See S. Ullman, *The Principles of Semantics* (2nd ed.; Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), 117; G. B. Tzarfati, *Hebrew Semantics* (2nd ed.; Jerusalem: A. Rubinstein, 1985), 173 onward [Hebrew].

[40] Ullman, *Semantics*, 171–99; G. B. Tzarfati, *The Language of My People: Hebrew Language Studies* (Jerusalem: Academy of the Hebrew Language, 1997), 11 [Hebrew].

[41] Similarity between the signified is a metaphorical axis, while affinity between the signifiers is a metonymic axis. Similarity between signifiers is essentially popular etymology, while affinity between the signified is due to change resulting from proximity. See Ullman, *Semantics*, 211; Tzarfati, *Semantics*, 127–34; idem, *The Language of My People*, 14. Tzarfati claims that some changes cannot be categorized within these definitions, certainly including the expansion or contraction of meaning (*The Language of My People*, 19–20).

[42] Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17,* 9.

[43] *HALOT* 4:1699–1700.

[44] See A. Even-Shoshan, *The New Dictionary* (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1997), 5:1921 [Hebrew].

[45] R. Barthes, *Mythologies* (trans. A. Lavers; New York: Hill & Wang, 1972), 114.

[46] Barthes, *Mythologies*, 117–18. Barthes emphasizes that "a whole book may be the signifier of a single concept; and conversely, a minute form (a word, a gesture) can serve as a signifier to a concept filled with a very rich

In light of this explanation, a *toledot* formula that introduces a genealogical list is a sign that means "descendants," while in a formula that opens a narrative passage, the word *toledot* serves as a new signifier that generates the meaning of the original sign in a wider sense—"family chronicles/story." There is no knowing when the semantic expansion of the word *toledot* occurred, but it is clear that in the present form of the book of Genesis, the word *toledot* features in more than one sense, and the possibility that different meanings were already embedded in the text at the time of writing cannot be ruled out.

THE *TOLEDOT* FORMULA: AN ADAPTABLE STRUCTURAL DEVICE

If the word *toledot* is polysemous and does not only mean "descendants" but also "chronicles" or "family story," then it might be argued that its unifying literary function is lost, as Carr claims.[47] I believe that this is not the case, as above all, in contrast to translations, which completely alter the form of the word (the signifier), this form is retained in the Hebrew text, and its repetition creates a pattern which unifies the text despite the different meanings in its different appearances (the signified). Thus the *toledot* formula may play a range of literary roles while simultaneously serving to unify the narrative.

Moreover, because of the semantic proximity of the two senses of the word *toledot*, the primary meaning of "descendants" is likely to reverberate, though its main meaning is "chronicles"/"story." That is, the word *toledot* is polysemous, and even when the formula introduces a narrative passage, "descendants" may also be connoted along with the primary meaning of "chronicles"/"story," together with the semantic associations of this meaning: consequences, chains of events, and so on.[48] Therefore, even when the formula does not introduce a genealogical list, and even when the ensuing narrative does not necessarily concern the sons of the father who features in the formula, the semantic field common to both meanings echoes, linking the different instances of the formula and contributing to the book's unison and cohesion.[49]

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history" (120).

[47] Carr, "Patterns," 167–68.

[48] It seems that it may be possible to categorize the polysemy of the narrative *toledot* formula under the definition of "accompanying linguistic meaning," because the "word carries baggage with it—an additional meaning, beyond the initial conceptual meaning of the word." J. Grossman, *Ambiguity in the Biblical Narrative and its Contribution to the Literary Formation* (Ph.D. diss.; Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University, 2006), 4 [Hebrew].

[49] For a definition of the term "semantic field," and a survey of relevant research, see T. Sutskover, *The semantic field of "seeing" in the Book of*

The precise meaning of the narrative formula, or the relation-
ship between its meanings, which vary slightly from occurrence to
occurrence, can be determined in context. The meaning "descend-
ants" is notably retained when the formula serves to introduce a
narrative about the sons of the specified father; and considerably
less so when the story concerns the father himself. Both meanings
have similar weight when the formula introduces events that con-
cern both the father and his son/s.

Recognizing the polysemous quality of the word *toledot* does
not weaken the potency of the formula as a unifying device, but
rather reinforces the understanding that the *toledot* formula is a
sophisticated, adaptable structural device employed in the book of
Genesis. This understanding is reflected in many studies of the
book of Genesis that explore different aspects of the *toledot* for-
mula's adaptability, among them the difference between a formula
that introduces a genealogical list and one that opens a narrative
passage; the effect created by formulae that introduce linear and
segmental genealogical lists; formulae dedicated to members of the
chosen line and those who were not chosen; and more.[50]

My own study relates to an aspect that has not yet been
explored in research: the nature of the *toledot* formulae that intro-
duce narrative material. While the narrative formula always serves
as a heading to the story of an important, divinely elected figure
who plays a significant role in the story, the focus of the story itself

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Genesis and the coherence of the text (Ph.D. diss.; Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University,
2006), 14–23 [Hebrew].

[50] Wilson (*Genealogy and History*, 9) mainly distinguishes between linear
and segmental *toledot*, pointing to their different function with regard to
the chosen and those who were not chosen. Scharbert ("Der Sinn der
Toledot-Formel," 46) focuses mainly on the theological, and distinguishes
between the *toledot* of those who were not chosen ("exclusion toledot"—
Ausscheidungstoledot) and the *toledot* of those chosen by God ("promise tole-
dot"—*Verheißungstoledot*). Weimar focuses on the grammatical-syntactic
aspect of the formula (P. Weimar, "Die Toledot-Formel in der Priester-
schriftlichen Geschichtsdarstellung," *BZ* 18 [1974], 65–93, 80–84).
Tengström (*Toledotformel*, 19–25) differentiates between a narrative formula
(*erzählerische*) and a genealogical one (*aufzählende*), and links this to the
theological function of the formula: the narrative formula introduces a
story about a chosen individual, and focuses on Israel's continuity. The
genealogical formula serves as an introduction to the family tree of differ-
ent tribes, focusing on the relationship between Israel's ancestors and
other nations. Thomas (*Generations*, 69–73, 83–94) claims that the main
difference between the formulae lies in the presence or absence of the
conjunctive *waw*, which determines whether the formula is a main heading
or a secondary heading, which in turn determines the hierarchy of the
passages in question. Despite the considerable contribution of these sug-
gestions to the understanding of the complex function of the formula,
each has its own weak point, and many questions remain without answers,
such as why are there two formulae for Esau (36:1; 36:9)? A discussion of
this question, as well as others, far exceeds the scope of this article.

varies: the narrative may focus upon the son of the father mentioned in the formula; upon events that befell the father himself; or upon the father and son/s together.[51]

THE LITERARY DESIGN OF THE NARRATIVE *TOLEDOT* FORMULAE

The literary design of the *toledot* formulae that introduce narrative passages in Genesis also testifies to the formulae's adaptability, as all appear in the same basic form with slight variations that hint to the unique aspect of the material to follow. Each formula begins with "these are the *toledot* of X," but the wording then changes: the *toledot* of Terah and Jacob include the name of the father's son/s: "*Now these are the toledot of* Terah. Terah was the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran was the father of Lot" (11:27); "these are the *toledot* of Jacob Joseph, being seventeen years old. . ." (37:2).

This information hints that the narrative to come will concern the sons of the specified father, and indeed, the stories that follow concern Abram and Joseph. In these instances, the formula indeed introduces a story about the *son* of the specified father, as mentioned at the beginning of this discussion. In contrast, the other narrative *toledot* formulae do not incorporate the names of the fathers' sons:

"*These are the toledot* of the heavens and the earth when they were created. In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens" אלה תולדות השמים והארץ בהבראם ביום עשות יהוה אלהים ארץ ושמים (2:4).

"*These are the toledot* of Noah—Noah was a righteous man, blameless he was in his generation, with God walked Noah" אלה תולדת נח נח איש צדיק תמים היה בדרתיו את האלהים התהלך נח (6:9).

"*And these are the toledot* of Isaac the son of Abraham, Abraham begot Isaac" ואלה תולדת יצחק בן אברהם אברהם הוליד את יצחק (25:19).

This hints that in these cases, the formula does not serve as a heading for a narrative about the sons of the specified father; we will explore the precise function of each formula shortly. I will first discuss the Noah and Isaac formulae, which refer to human characters, followed by the anomalous *toledot* of heaven and earth.

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[51] It is worth noting that while genealogical lists are devoted to both chosen and rejected lines, there are no narrative *toledot* formulae introducing a story about a person who is not chosen. It may be that the genealogical lists create a connection between the groups while the narrative formulae emphasize the difference between them. See Tengström, *Toledotformel*, 19–25; T. E. Fertheim, *The Pentateuch* (Interpreting Biblical Texts; Nashville: Abingdon, 1989), 68.

THE *TOLEDOT* OF NOAH (6:9): A NARRATIVE CONCERNING THE FATHER

The unique aspect of Noah's formula is the repetition of his name, which appears three times, and the moral description provided: he is a blameless righteous person[52] who walked with God.[53] This focus on his character anticipates that the ensuing narrative will focus upon Noah himself and his central role within the flood narrative, as the only righteous person in his generation, whose behavior is antithetical to all of humanity's violence and moral corruption (6:12).[54]

According to this explanation, the meaning of the word *toledot* is "chronicles"/"story"; its function is to introduce the story of Noah and the flood, rather than a narrative about his children; and there is barely any echo of the meaning "descendants."

The repetition of Noah's name three times in 6:9, and the fact that in this case, the formula introduces a narrative about the *father* rather than his children, focuses the reader's attention upon Noah himself. How is Noah characterized in the Flood narrative? To a great extent, he is characterized as a "new Adam," replacing the original Adam: Noah "*walked* with God," in contrast to Adam and Eve, who hid from God "*walking* in the garden at the time of the evening breeze" (3:8). Noah, too, has three sons and works the land, similarly to Adam.[55] Accordingly, another genealogical list is brought after the flood (10:1–32), similarly to the list that features

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[52] The word תמים, meaning blameless, innocent, may describe Noah's righteousness, or serve as an adjective in itself, which describes Noah. The structure of the parallelism supports the first option; see Cassuto's discussion (*Commentary*, 33); but cf. J. Blenkinsopp, *Creation, Un-Creation, Re-Creation: A Discursive Commentary on Genesis 1–11* (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 135.

[53] The expression "walked with God" את האלהים התהלך appears in relation to Noah, as well as before, in the description of Enoch (5:22, 24). A variation of this expression, "to walk *before* God," לפני האלהים is used for the forefathers (17:1; 24:40; 48:15). Cassuto (*Commentary*, 194) does not discuss this difference, but notes that the expression "to walk with God" means to walk in His path in a moral sense and be devoted as is befitting of a blameless righteous person. Von Rad (*Genesis*, 71) is convinced that the word "את" implies an extent of closeness to God that only existed before the flood. Hamilton (*Genesis 1–17*, 258) also interprets the phrase "to walk with" as an expression of closeness and friendship with God, whereas "to walk before" has connotations of a servant walking before his master. Mathews (*Genesis 1–11:26*, 313) is convinced that there is no significance to the difference and in both cases they express intimacy with God.

[54] Hence vv. 5–8 in ch. 6 serve as a summary of previous events and deal with humanity in general, while the Flood narrative, focusing on Noah and his family, only begins in 6:9, where the formula introduces the story of an important, "chosen" character.

[55] See Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 351. Wenham (*Genesis 1–15*, 207) also notes this, though elaborates less.

after the Creation narratives (4:17 onward; 5:1–32). In this way, the postdiluvian world is traced anew to a single ancestor—Noah.[56] Noah's characterization as a new Adam is part of the theme of renewal that is manifest in the Flood narrative, expressing that the postdiluvian world is recreated anew in a new creation that replaces the first creation.[57] This idea is conveyed through many parallels between the Flood narrative and the Creation narrative, which imply that the flood reduces the world to its chaotic pre-Creation state, so that the postdiluvian world constitutes a new world.[58]

This new world, created after the flood, differs from the previous world God created; this is reflected in the blessing and commandment Noah receives from God after the flood (9:1–8). Similarly, Adam also received a blessing after Creation (1:28–30), but Noah's blessing permits mankind to eat animal flesh. This permission reflects the new relationship between man and his environment in the new world, and the normative changes it requires.[59] The prohibition to consume blood and the prohibition of murder and its accompanying punishment (9:4–6) are juxtaposed with the permission to eat animal flesh (9:3). These new prohibitions hint at the dangers lurking in this new world. The rainbow, which serves

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[56] Sarna, *Understanding Genesis,* 56.

[57] Wenham (*Genesis 1–15*, 145) sees this in 6:7's similar phrasing to 1:20, 24–30, which, in his opinion, expresses God's undoing of His first creation.

[58] For example, the expression "on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened" ביום הזה נבקעו כל מעינת תהום רבה וארבת השמים נפתחו (7:11) recalls the "formless void" and the heavens at the beginning of creation והארץ היתה תהו ובהו וחשך על פני תהום ורוח אלהים מרחפת על פני המים (1:1–2); the categorization of the animals (bird, beast, etc.) recalls the order of creation on the fifth and sixth day (1:20–30); both animals and human beings were commanded to fill the land ומלאו (1:22, 28) and before the flood the land was filled with evil ותמלא (6:12); God saw the land "And God saw that the earth" וירא אלהים את הארץ (6:12) is parallel to God's looking down upon creation "And God saw that it was good," וירא אלהים כי טוב (1:10) which is repeated again and again in ch. 1; the destruction of all that contains "the breath of life" כל בשר אשר בו רוח חיים (6:17) is parallel to God's breathing life into man ויפח באפיו נשמת חיים (2:7). The destruction of the earth by water reduces the land to its state before creation, when "a wind from God swept over the face of the waters." (1:2). The time specification, the repetition of the number seven and the expression "and God said," all encourage comparisons between the two narratives. Based on these connections and allusions, Turner proposes that they force the reader "to view the ensuing Flood as being more than a destruction, but as a decreation" (L. A. Turner, *Genesis* [Reading: A New Biblical Commentary; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001], 46).

[59] D. J. Clines, "The Theology of the Flood Narrative," in *On the Way to the Postmodern*, vol. 2 (JSOTSup, 293; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 508–23 (522–23) (Initially published in *Faith and Thought* 100 [1973], 128–42).

as a sign of the covenant between God and humanity after the flood (9:12–17), can also be considered a new creation,[60] and signifies a physical change in the new world.[61]

The fact that the formula introducing the Flood narrative already focuses on the *father himself*, and the understanding that in this case, the formula introduces a narrative about the father rather than his sons—thus taking on the meaning of "story" rather than "descendants"—hints to the central theme of renewal in the ensuing narrative.

However, in the verse following Noah's *toledot* formula (6:10), the birth of Noah's sons is mentioned; hence the meaning "descendants, offspring" also resonates in the formula here.[62] This hints that the Flood narrative also contains the theme of *continuity*.[63] This theme is manifest through Noah's preservation of the animals (6:18–20),[64] as well as the preservation of his family's own lives as remnants of the old world.

This preservation maintains continuity between the old world and the new. The postdiluvian description, "As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease" (8:22) shows that the natural laws of the old world are retained in the new world.[65] This sequence is built of binary oppositions—seedtime/harvest, cold/heat, summer/winter, day/night, similar to the binary oppositions of the first creation—day/night, sea/dry land, and so on, which expresses the

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[60] As Ibn Ezra claims (on 9:13, *Mikraot Gedolot HaKeter*) based on conjugation of the root *ntn* in past tense as present progressive: "I have given My rainbow—look, I am now giving My rainbow."

[61] According to Lorberbaum, this physical change represents a change in the normative state (Y. Lorberbaum, "The Rainbow in the Cloud: An Anger-management Device," *JR* 89 [2009], 498–540 [524]).

[62] Grossman (*Ambiguity*, 30) comments that the mention of the additional meaning alongside the polysemous word encourages the reader to recognize both layers of meaning that the word contains. The juxtaposition of the names of Noah's sons in the next verse, combined with the verb root *yld*, (to bear), raises both meanings of the word in the reader's mind.

[63] Robinson ("Literary Function," 59) points out the dimension of continuity and the transition between generations reflected through the genealogical lists; and this observation can be extended to the mention of the names of Noah's sons following the *toledot* formula. See also Steinberg, "The Genealogical Framework," 43.

[64] The verses emphasize this through repetition in 6:20: "Of the birds according to their *kinds*, and of the animals according to their *kinds*, of every creeping thing of the ground according to its *kind*, two of every *kind* shall come in to you, to keep them alive," מהעוף למינהו ומן הבהמה למינה; מכל רמש האדמה למינהו שנים מכל יבאו אליך להחיות; and in 7:14 as well.

[65] Rashi (on Gen 8:22 *Mikraot Gedolot HaKeter*) in the wake of the midrash in Gen. Rab. 34:11, notes that while during the flood all natural laws were suspended, they returned immediately after the flood. See also Cassuto, *Commentary*, 83.

continuity of creation in the world after the flood.[66] Moreover, the theme of continuity is also present in the verses that seem to reflect new creation: the new license to consume animal flesh and the prohibition to murder, which symbolizes new order in the new world, recalls the first creation—"for in His own *image*, God made humankind," כי בצלם אלהים עשה את האדם (9:6)—and expresses continuity between the new world and the first creation, when humanity was created in God's image—"So God created human-kind in his image, in the *image* of God he created them," **ויברא** אלהים את האדם בצלמו בצלם אלהים ברא אתו (1:27).

The immediate context of the continuity suggested by the formula is the continuation of Noah's family through his sons, but this theme has importance in a wider context, as I have just described. The mention of Noah's sons following the formula in ch. 6 may have been designed to anticipate this theme, as Noah's sons do not play any significant role during the actual Flood narra-tive; they only accompany their father.[67]

The themes of renewal and continuity are not in harmony with each other in the narrative; rather, there is tension between them, which is one of the Flood narrative's striking features.[68] This tension is also manifest in other conflicting themes, such as destruction versus salvation.[69]

In summary, Noah's *toledot* formula contains the meaning "chronicles"/"story" and focuses upon the father himself. It con-stitutes a heading for a story about the father, and hints to the theme of renewal in the story, presenting Noah as the new found-

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[66] For salient striking binary pairs in the Creation narrative, see Clines, "Theology," 517.

[67] Aside from the divine command to enter and leave the ark (6:18; 8:16); these commands' narrative fulfillment (7:7, 13; 8:18); the divine blessing to Noah after the flood (9:1); and the formation of the covenant (9:8), Noah's sons are not mentioned.

[68] In general, the Flood narrative is characterized by opposites, repeti-tion, and even contradictions, such as various names of God, different numbers of animals brought onto the ark, and the duration of the flood. The diachronic school explained these differences as the result of the combination of J and P by the redactor/compiler. See, for example, Driver, *Genesis*, 85–86; Skinner, *Genesis*, 147–50; Von Rad, *Genesis*, 119. The harmonistic approach views the story as cohesive, and explains that these contradictions are imagined, or characteristics of the biblical narra-tive, and so on. See Cassuto, *Commentary*, 22–32. A later claim is that while the traces of the original sources that were fused are evident, its final form is cohesive thanks to the redactor's creative hand (Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 169; idem, "The Coherence of the Flood Narrative," *VT* 28 [1978], 336–48). Another possible direction, raised by Van Wolde, claims that the inner tensions of the narrative testify to a high artistic caliber, which can be read synchronically (E. Van Wolde, *Words Become Worlds: Semantic Studies of Genesis 1–11* [Leiden: Brill, 1994], 77).

[69] Van Wolde (*Words,* 80–83) points this out through a semantic analy-sis of the root *nḥm* in the story.

ing father in a newly (re)created world. However, the mention of Noah's sons in the following verse raises the theme of continuity in the ensuing story. Noah's formula therefore reflects the character of the unit it introduces by anticipating its central themes.

THE *TOLEDOT* OF ISAAC (25:19): THE STORY OF A FATHER AND HIS SONS

THE DUAL NATURE OF THE FORMULA: A HEADING FOR TWO NARRATIVES

One of the implications of understanding the *toledot* formula as a heading to a narrative regarding the sons of the father concerns the accepted division of three patriarchal narrative cycles within the book of Genesis: those of Abraham, Jacob and Joseph, which each open with a *toledot* formula referring to their father—Terah (11:27), Isaac (25:9) and Jacob (37:2).[70] According to this approach, the absence of a *toledot* formula specifying Abraham implies that there is no narrative cycle concerning Isaac.[71] However, as shown above, in the case of Isaac's *toledot* formula, the ensuing narrative does not only concern his sons, but also Isaac himself.[72] Additionally, this formula's opening is identical to the other formulae: "these are the *toledot* of X," but in contrast to the expectations that Isaac's sons will be introduced, Isaac's father is mentioned twice: "Isaac the son of Abraham—Abraham begot Isaac." This formulation is most

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[70] See for example Skinner, *Genesis*, lxvi; E. A. Speiser, *Genesis* (AB; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1962), lx–liii; G. W. Coats, *Genesis: With an Introduction to Narrative Literature* (FOTL; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 19–20; Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 55–56, 268–69.

[71] Various reasons have been proposed for the absence of Isaac's narrative cycle in Genesis. Many accept Noth's opinion that Isaac's tradition was once dominant but during the stage of establishing Abraham as Isaac's father it was considerably abridged, and in the present text it is only represented partially, with only fragments remaining. See M. Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions* (trans. W. Anderson of the first ed. of *Überlieferungsgeschichte des Pentateuch,* 1948; Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1972), 102–15, 216; and cf. Van Seters, who claims that Isaac's tradition (ch. 26) is an invention of the (later) J source that imitates the Abraham tradition, while Coats claims that the tradition originated in the P source. See J. Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), 183, 191, 311; idem, *Prologue to History: The Yahwist as Historian in Genesis* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 288; Coats, *Genesis*, 14. In literary scholarship, there is a prevalent view that the absence of an Isaac cycle reflects the secondary, minor aspect of his character and function in the patriarchal narrative: see E. Boase, "Life in the Shadows: The Role and the Function of Isaac in Genesis—Synchronic and Diachronic Readings," *VT* 51 (2001), 312–35 (312–22); K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26* (NAC; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2005), 370.

[72] See p. 5 above.

unusual, shifting the focus from Isaac to Abraham. What is the significance of this literary design?

Hamilton proposes that the expression "X begot Y" expresses the perpetuation of the father through his son, adding that the lack of this formula suggests that the father is not perpetuated through his sons. In Isaac's *toledot* formula, it is written that Abraham begot Isaac, but not that Isaac begot Jacob, which leads to the conclusion that Isaac is not perpetuated by his sons. To support his statement, Hamilton argues that the phrase "Isaac begot Jacob and Esau" never appears—it is only noted that he married Rebecca.[73] Hamilton's claim is problematic as there is no Abraham *toledot* formula; moreover, this expression fails to appear in Jacob's *toledot* formula (37:2), but Hamilton does not claim that there is a similar lack of perpetuation in this case. In addition, he also fails to make this claim regarding Terah's formula, where this expression features in relation to Haran (11:27).

Waltke suggests that the phrase "Abraham begot Isaac" compensates for the lack of Abraham's *toledot* formula, and, furthermore, for the lack of an Isaac cycle. In his opinion, this vacuum is the result of Isaac's focus on fulfilling his own desire rather than God's plans, as he gradually transforms from a believer to a non-believer.[74]

I agree with Waltke's proposal that the comment "Abraham begot Isaac" replaces Abraham's missing formula, but I disagree with his explanation for this lacuna. It is difficult to understand why the author would incorporate this phrase if his objective was to emphasize its absence. It is far more reasonable to postulate that this phrase was incorporated into Isaac's formula in order to assert his narrative presence, and that this insertion serves a literary function as a heading of the ensuing narrative.

I believe that Abraham's *toledot* formula was postponed to 25:19 and included in Isaac's formula, as Waltke suggests; not to detract from Isaac's importance, but in order to create a double introduction that serves as a heading for both Isaac's story and Jacob's story. In other words, it seems that the *toledot* formula of 25:19 dedicated to Abraham, which introduces Isaac's story, is in fact composed of two formulae: (1) Isaac's *toledot*, "these are the *toledot* of Isaac," marking the beginning of the story of his sons; (2) the *toledot* formula of Abraham, manifested in "Abraham was the father of Isaac," which introduces the story of Abraham's son Isaac and his patriarchal chronicles. Emphasizing Isaac as "the son of Abraham" connects the two "formulae" that comprise v. 19.

Here, the word *toledot* reflects both the meaning "chronicles"/"story," as it introduces a story about Isaac, and "descend-

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[73] V. P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18–50* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 175.

[74] Waltke, *Genesis*, 351, 357.

ants," as a formula that introduces a story about the sons of the father, Jacob and Esau.

The similarity between the phrase "Abraham was the father of Isaac" אברהם הוליד את יצחק (25:19) and Terah's toledot formula, "Terah was the father of Abraham," תרח הוליד את אברם (11:27) supports this theory because their similarity generates an affinity between the beginning of Abraham's story and the beginning of Isaac's, hinting that the function of the phrase "Abraham was the father of Isaac" serves as an alternative to Abraham's *toledot* formula. Through this, Isaac's formula alludes to the "original placement" of the formula, whose final placement was calculated to serve various literary purposes.

One of the implications of this postponement is the creation of literary suspense: will Abraham indeed have *toledot,* offspring, of his own? This is because the formula may hint to the continuity of the next generation, and in Abraham's story, his continuation is cast in doubt; suspense revolves around this point. Had there been a *toledot* formula for Abraham earlier in the text, it would diffuse this suspense, revealing that his crisis of infertility would be solved.[75] In this way Isaac's birth and childhood is an inextricable part of Abraham's own story, where the birth and survival of the son reflects a fulfillment of the divine promise made to the father at the beginning of his story, and serves as its main theme.[76]

I would like to propose that another literary effect produced by this postponement is the creation of the Isaac narrative within Genesis, so that this phrase effectively opens two parallel narrative cycles: the Jacob cycle and the story of Isaac. Isaac's unique *toledot* formula has implications for the delineation of the patriarchal narrative cycle, as it allows for the recognition of a literary unit devoted to Isaac in parallel to a literary unit devoted to Jacob.

THE DELINEATION OF THE ISAAC NARRATIVE

In contrast to the prevalent opinion in research that the patriarchal narratives can be divided into the cycles of Abraham, Jacob and Joseph, a number of scholars claim that Isaac's narrative extends beyond ch. 26:1–33; and different delineations for such a unit have been proposed.[77] The idea that Isaac is the protagonist of a certain

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[75] See Andersen, "Genealogical Prominence," 262; similarly, Thomas, *Generations*, 50–51.

[76] This explanation is consistent with the prevalent opinion in research that God's promise of seed and the difficulties until this promise is fulfilled is one of the central themes in the Abraham cycle. This theme is expressed through Sarah's childlessness as well as the death that hovers over Isaac in the Binding of Isaac narrative. See D. J. A. Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch* (JSOTSup, 10; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1978), 48; Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 259, 262; Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26,* 73; Thomas, *Generations*, 51.

[77] Teugels proposes reading chs. 22:20–24; 24; 25:19–34 and 27:1–28:9 as the Isaac and Rebecca cycle (L. Teugels, "A Matriarchal Cycle? The

unity in Genesis is consistent with the notion reflected in the final version of the text dictating that Isaac is considered one of the three national patriarchs, on equal footing with Abraham and Jacob;[78] despite the relative brevity of his narrative material in Genesis, he is mentioned together with them in most biblical sources.[79] Moreover, Andersen shows that the figure of Isaac occupies a prominent place in the book according to several criteria: (1) He is present in nine episodes in the book. (2) His birth story is miraculous and includes elements of barrenness and annunciation (17:15–22; 18:10–14; 21:1–8). (3) The list of his descendants is segmental and includes a generation of grandchildren (35:23; 36:4). (4) His death is featured explicitly and includes mention of his age, burial and other details (35:28–29). According to these criteria for character prominence, Isaac's "score" is similar to that of Abraham and of Isaac.[80]

Portrayal of Isaac in Genesis in the Light of the Presentation of Rebekah," *Bijdragen* 56 [1995], 61–72). Towner defines chs. 24–27 as Isaac's "mini cycle" (W. S. Towner*, Genesis* [Westminster Bible Companion; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001], 193–94). Dorsey defines chs. 21:8–28:4 as the story of Isaac (D. A. Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis-Malachi* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004], 57–58). Kim-Jae claims that the Isaac cycle includes 23:1–25:11 (J. Kim-Jae, "The Existing and Function of the Isaac-Rebecca cycle," in J. R. Wood, J. E. Harvey, and M. Leuchter [eds.], *From Babel to Babylon: Essays on Biblical History and Literature in Honour of Brian Peckham* [LHBOTS, 455; New York: T&T Clark, 2006], 38–46).

[78] The rabbinic sages adhere to the concept of three forefathers: "The term 'patriarchs' only applies to three" (b. Ber. 16b).

[79] He is presented thus in the eyes of the characters and through the narrator in different contexts: God is presented as the God of Abraham and Isaac in the story of Jacob (28:13; 31:42; 32:10) and in the book of Exodus onward as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Exod 3:16, 15–26; 4:5; 6:3; 1 Kgs 18:36; 1 Chr 29:17; 2 Chr 30:5). God's promise of the land to the forefathers usually mentions all three together (Gen 50:24; Num 32:11; Deut 1:8; 6:10; 9:5; 9:27; 30:20; 34:4), as well as the covenant with them (Exod 2:24; Lev 26:42; Deut 29:12; 2 Kgs 13:23; 1 Chr 16:15; Ps 105:9–10). Moreover, Joshua mentions all three forefathers in his historical account of the nation (Josh 24:3–4), and Jeremiah states that the Israelites are the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Jer 33:26). However, in several places Abraham and Jacob are mentioned without Isaac (Isa 29:22; 41:8; Mic 7:20; Ps 105:6), although Isaac's absence can be explained according to the specific context in each instance and does not, I believe, indicate a wider biblical tendency to discount Isaac's patriarchy. For example, in Ps 105:6 only Abraham and Jacob are mentioned, but in v. 9 all three feature in the context of the promise. It is most difficult to justify Isaac's absence in Mic 7:20 because the verse discusses the promise to the forefathers. It may be that this absence is compensated for through the continuation of the verse in the phrase "our forefathers," as Radak suggests in his commentary on the verse.

[80] Andersen, "Genealogical Prominence," 250.

Until now, however, no one has considered the *toledot* formula as a defining marker of Isaac's narrative cycle. In the wake of those who ascribe Isaac his own literary unit, I propose that this unit can be delineated in relation to the *toledot* formulae, which serve as central markers within Genesis and divide it into units; this is especially salient in regard to the patriarchal narratives.[81] I believe that Isaac's narrative spans chs. 25:19–28:9, concluding with Jacob's departure for Haran; even if he is not the exclusive or most prominent character in every scene, his presence is nonetheless significant in the text. His story constitutes a cohesive "Mini Cycle" centering upon a clear thematic structure, which even fulfills literary criteria of cohesion and sequence.[82]

The narrative is unified through structure of association,[83] characterized by unity of time because Isaac serves as the head of the family throughout the unit.[84] Isaac's patriarchy is saliently marked through his *toledot* formula of 25:19, which immediately follows Ishmael's genealogical lists (25:12–18), describing the rejected line. The significance of this information is that from the moment of the twins' birth (25:19–26) until Jacob's departure to Haran (28:1–9), Isaac serves as the head of the family, and decisions regarding the family's fate rest upon his shoulders. Even when he is manipulated, as described in ch. 27, such manipulation is necessary because he is the patriarch and family authority. While his death is only mentioned in 35:29, his fatherly role draws to an end after sending Jacob to Haran, so that his death serves to delineate the story of Jacob but not the story of Isaac. Isaac's own

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[81] The *toledot* formula can be related to as an introduction formula which facilitates the establishment of a narrative's boundaries. Regarding formulae of this kind, see Y. Zakovitch, *Every High Official has a Higher One Set over Him: A Literary Analysis of 2 Kings 5* (Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1985), 15 [Hebrew]; and Y. Amit, *Reading Biblical Narratives* (Tel-Aviv: Ministry of Defense Press, 2000), 29 [Hebrew].

[82] As mentioned (n. 77), the term "mini cycle" was coined by Towner and reflects the limited scope of the cycle on the one hand and its thematic unity on the other.

[83] According to M. Perry and M. Sternberg, "Caution: A Literary Text! Problems in the Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative," *Hasifrut* 2 (1970), 608–63 [Hebrew] a structure of association "does not have to evolve from (at least) one of the other elements, it suffices that it can be categorized within one framework with all the other elements" (ibid., 635). Polak also notes that in modern literary scholarship "basic patterns have become apparent, which define the structure of the action and its logic regardless of causality" (F. Polak, *Biblical Narrative: Aspects of Art and Design* [Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1994], 127 [Hebrew]).

[84] Unity of time is one of the fundamental criteria for literary unity, and it is one of the criteria listed by Amit (*Reading*, 140) for identifying a cohesive literary unit. Dorsey (*Literary Structure*, 23) is also convinced that the dimension of time creates coherence and cohesion within a unit, and gives the example of chs. 1–12 in the book of Joshua, which all take place during one period: the conquest of Canaan.

narrative is defined according to the time Isaac actively serves as the head of the family, and therefore concludes in 28:9.[85]

THE ROLE OF ISAAC IN THE NARRATIVE

Throughout chs. 25:19–28:9 Isaac's presence is significant, with the exception of the transaction of the birthright episode (25:29–34), and is even prominent in relation to that of other figures. This is reflected in the fact that Isaac's name appears 39 times, while Esau is mentioned 35 times, Jacob 29 times, and Rebecca only 13. Even the number of verbs ascribed to Isaac is significantly larger than verbs used to describe the actions of other characters: in ch. 25:19–34 Isaac is associated with 5 verbs;[86] in ch. 26 with 39;[87] 63 in ch. 27;[88] and 9 in 28:1–9;[89] reaching a grand total of 106 verbs compared to 20 verbs associated with Rebecca; 51 with Esau, and 39 with Jacob. The same is true regarding dialogue; Isaac speaks 237 words in direct speech, Rebecca 129 words, Esau 69, and Jacob 49.[90]

In this literary unit many parts of the plot are motivated by Isaac's decisions, and although his sons and wife Rebecca play a central role, they largely operate in reaction to his actions. For example, Rebecca's pregnancy is granted through Isaac's prayer (25:21); and Isaac's love for Esau (25:28), which marks him as the preferred heir,[91] can be understood as the motivating factor for Jacob's initiative to purchase the birthright from Esau, thus

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[85] Similarly, Jacob's death takes place during the Joseph narrative in 49:33.

[86] 25:20, 21, 26, 28.

[87] 26:1, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 27, 30, 31, 33.

[88] 27:1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 14, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 30, 31, 32, 33, 35, 37, 39, 41.

[89] 28:1, 5, 6.

[90] Isaac's direct speech features in the following verses (the number in brackets signifying the number of words in each verse): 26:7 (2), 9 (5), 22 (7), 27 (8); 27:1 (1), 2–4 (31), 18 (4), 20 (5), 21 (10), 22 (6), 24 (4), 25 (8), 26 (5), 27–29 (34), 32 (2), 33 (15), 35 (5), 37 (18), 39 (8), 40 (13); 28:1 (5), 2 (16), 3 (9), 4 (16). Rebecca's direct speech: 25:22 (3); 27:6–10 (54), 13 (9), 42–45 (45), 46 (17). Esau: 25:30 (9), 32 (8); 27:1 (1), 31 (8), 32 (4), 34 (4), 36 (18), 38 (9), 41 (8). Jacob: 25:31 (5), 33 (3); 27:11–12 (19), 18 (1), 19 (15), 20 (5), 24 (1).

[91] Each parent's preference is described with the root *'hv* (love): "Isaac *loved* Esau because he had a taste for game, and Rebekah *loved* Jacob," (25:28) a root that often means love in the sense of choice or election, as can be seen in other places in the Bible (Deut 4:37; 10:15; Hos 11:1; Mal 1:2). See G. Wallis, "אהב," *TDOT* 1:101–18 (102); E. Assis, "Why Edom? On the Hostility Towards Jacob's Brother in Prophetic Sources," *VT* 56 (2006), 1–20 (1). Brueggeman is also convinced that this verse expresses each parent's choice of heir, see W. Brueggemann, *Genesis* (Interpretation; Atlanta, GA: John Knox, 1982), 217; and similarly Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, 346.

improving his status within his father's household (25:29–34).[92] In ch. 26:1–33, Isaac is the protagonist of the story, which opens with God's revelation to him and marks him out as the patriarch replacing Abraham.[93] Chapter 26:34–35 describes Esau's marriage with Hittite women, which causes great chagrin to Isaac and Rebecca, and ch. 27 describes Isaac's intention to bless Esau, which leads Rebecca to orchestrate his deception. The blessing Isaac bestows upon Esau after this deception becomes apparent (27:39–40) conceals the potential to exclude him from the household,[94] and the blessing given to Jacob on the eve of his departure to Haran (28:1–4) marks him as the successor. While Rebecca is the one to initiate Jacob's journey, Isaac initiates its accompanying blessing.[95]

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[92] The juxtaposition between 25:28, which describes the parents' preferences, and 25:29, which opens with description of Jacob preparing a mess of lentils, reinforces this, and there is even possible wordplay in the verb ויזד "and he cooked up," hinting that he may be "cooking up" a deception. See H. White, *Narration and Discourse in the Book of Genesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 211; A. Shapira, "Jacob and Esau: A Polyvalent Reading," *Iyyunei Mikra u-parshanut* 4 (1997), 249–82 (262–63) [Hebrew].

[93] The revelation to Isaac is similar to those of Abraham and incorporates different blessings bestowed at different times: 12:2–3, 7; 13:14–17; 15:5, 18–21; 17:2–3, 6–8; 18:18; 22:15–18. The blessings of seed and land and promise, and their connection to the promises to Isaac establishes him as Abraham's heir and connects between father and son. See S. Niditch, *Underdogs and Tricksters: A Prelude to Biblical Folklore* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 36. Abraham is mentioned twice in the revelation to Isaac (26:3), which reinforces the understanding that Isaac is the heir of Abraham's promise.

[94] This explanation is based on understanding the preposition מ in v. 39 as the partitive מ implying that Isaac blesses Esau rather than curses him, as Benno Jacobs holds (B. Jacob, *Genesis*, 184). Similarly Driver, *Genesis*, 260; R. Alter, *Genesis: Translation and Commentary* (New York: Norton, 1996), 143; D. Sylva, "The Blessing of a Wounded Patriarch," *JSOT* 32 (2008), 270–86, 278–79. This is also based on identifying the root of the word תריד as *rwd*, "to wander" or "leave," which implies that Isaac suggested that Esau leave the land and the axis of the promise in order to evade Jacob's yoke, or otherwise remain at home but under Jacob's dominion. See L. Ginat, " 'But When You Shall Break Loose': A Study of Isaac's Blessing to Jacob (Genesis 27:31–40)," *Beit Mikra* 36 (1991), 84–90 [Hebrew].

[95] Jacob's blessings to his sons (chs. 48–49), however, are part of the Joseph narrative rather than the Jacob cycle, and this is because of their context. Here, Isaac's blessings are directly related, through the plot, to the story in 25:19–34, and thematically through the theme of blessing and the land to ch. 26, where Jacob's blessings are related directly to the story of Joseph, despite the fact that they have some connections to the Jacob cycle. I will note that there are those who are convinced that chs. 37–50 are not part of the Joseph story but are part of the Jacob cycle. See R. Clifford, "Genesis 37–50: Joseph Story or Jacob Story?," in C. A.

THE MAIN THEME OF THE NARRATIVE

The story of Isaac has other unifying qualities, such as similar characteristics in the opening (25:19–20) and the conclusion (28:5, 9);[96] the repetition of the root *brk* bless, as a *Leitwort*; and common motifs in these chapters;[97] moreover, its overall theme is the question of inheritance. The absence of a divine command to the father concerning the identity of the heir, and the fact that the sons are twins and of apparently equal standing lends the narrative a human quality, wherein the question of Isaac's heir and the criteria for this choice are raised.[98] The brothers' birth order and their differences of appearance and personality at birth (25:25) and as they grow (25:27) are directly related to their parents' preferences, especially in regard to Isaac's love for Esau because of his hunting skills (25:28). The question of inheritance informs the episodes of the sale of the birthright (25:29–34), as well as the issue of exogamous and endogamous marriages (26:34–35);[99] the characters grasp the father's

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Evans, J. N. Lohr, and D. L. Petersen (eds.), *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation* (VTSup, 152; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 213–29.

[96] "These are the descendants of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham was the father of Isaac; and Isaac was forty years old when *he took Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, the sister of Laban the Aramean, to be his wife*" (25:19–20) // "Thus Isaac sent Jacob away; and he went to *Paddan-aram, to Laban son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah*, Jacob's and Esau's mother; *Esau went to Ishmael and took* Mahalath daughter of Abraham's son Ishmael, and *sister of* Nebaioth, *to be his wife* in addition to the wives he had" (28:5, 9).

[97] The blessing and the birthright, authority, deceit, struggle, endogamous and exogamous marriage. I will shortly present the fundamental principles, which are discussed in depth in my doctoral dissertation: S. Schwartz, *The Isaac Narrative: A Literary Analysis of Genesis 25:19–28:9* (Ph.D. diss.; Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 2015) [Hebrew], which discusses the delineation of the Isaac narrative and its literary analysis.

[98] For the unique complications created by the birth of twins, see, for example, Steinberg, "The Genealogical Framework," 46–47; J. P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in Genesis: Specimens of Stylistic and Structural Analysis* (2nd ed.; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 88.

[99] This is evident from the story in ch. 24 where Abraham takes pains to ensure an endogamous marriage for his chosen son Isaac, and even from the words of Jacob's sons in 34:14–17. Scholars are divided regarding the reason for this preference: see N. A. Steinberg, "Alliance or Descent? The Function of Marriage in Genesis," *JSOT* 51 (1991), 45–55; idem, *Kinship and Marriage in Genesis* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 11–14; C. Frevel, "Introduction: The Discourse of Intermarriage in the Hebrew Bible," in C. Frevel (ed.), *Mixed Marriage: Intermarriage and Group Identity in the Second Temple Period* (New York: T&T Clark, 2011), 1–14 (8); R. L. Cohn, "Negotiating (with) the Natives: Ancestors and Identity in Genesis," *HTR* 96 (2003), 147–66 (165); Y. Fleishman, "The Significance of Name-Changing and the Law of Circumcision (Study of Genesis 17)," *Beit Mikra* 46 (2001), 310–21 [Hebrew].

blessing prior to his death as determinative of the heir's identity.[100] Isaac's blessing in 28:3–4 is also related to the theme of inheritance as it mentions the promises of the land and seed, which marks out the chosen son within the patriarchy. Even Isaac's story in 26:1–33 is related to this theme as it describes the process of Isaac's inheritance of Abraham and his attempts to inhabit the land. This chapter, which has other thematic ties to its adjacent chapters,[101] illuminates Isaac's preference for Esau after the reader has become acquainted with Isaac's sons and the challenges Isaac faces in inheriting the land.

It should be noted that defining the Isaac cycle as running from 25:19–28:9 does not contradict the fact that 25:19–35:29 constitute Jacob's narrative cycle; the *toledot* formula, as noted, opens two parallel cycles whose relationship is not linear but overlapping, each arranged according a different thematic structure which organizes each narrative. Unlike the Isaac narrative, where the central theme is the question of inheritance, Jacob's cycle centers upon the struggle between Jacob and Esau. The Jacob cycle is arranged chiastically, as Fishbane and others have shown, and in this narrative cycle, ch. 26 plays only a minor role, serving as an interlude which creates tension.[102]

Their demarcation—the Jacob cycle (25:19–35:29) and the Isaac cycle (25:19–28:9)—depends on perspective: the material of the Isaac cycle is contained within the Jacob cycle, and, depending on the reading of the text, can be grouped within either of their stories. Thus, chs. 25:19–28:9 can be read as an independent literary unit—the story of Isaac—or as part of the Jacob cycle.[103]

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[100] This seems to be Rebecca's central motive in the deception, although reading the blessing itself implies that the blessing is a firstborn's blessing that does not necessarily exclude the other son from inheritance. This subject is beyond the scope of this discussion, and is discussed at length in my dissertation.

[101] The extremely prominent theme of blessing in 26:1–33 is also prominent in ch. 27, as many have noted, among them: B. Jacob, *Genesis*, 170–75; Fokkelman, *Narrative Art*, 113–14; G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50* (WBC; Waco: Word Books, 1994), 187. The theme of deception is also common to both chapters. See Hamilton, *Genesis 18–50*, 210–11. Garsiel holds that ch. 26 contains motifs of both blessing and struggle, and claims that God's blessing and the struggle over it characterize the chapter and anticipate the nature of ch. 27, which includes them as well (M. Garsiel, "Literary Structure and Message in the Jacob and Esau Stories," *Hagut be-Miqra* 4 [1983], 63–81 [72] [Hebrew]).

[102] See above, n. 31.

[103] Thus, the delineation proposed above is an example of the fulfillment of Perry and Steinberg's definition in regard to the units of biblical texts: "The boundaries of a unit are dynamic; they are not fixed *a priori*, once and for all, but again and again, rearranging themselves to answer the questions asked, to suit the gaze directed upon them" (Perry and Sternberg, "Caution: A Literary Text!," 632).

In conclusion, Isaac's *toledot* formula introduces the story of Isaac's sons, Jacob and Esau—as well as the story of Isaac himself. This unique, dual function is reflected in its particular wording.

THE *TOLEDOT* OF HEAVEN AND EARTH (2:4): THE STORY OF THE CREATION OF HUMANITY

THE FORMULA AS NARRATIVE HEADING

Describing non-human entities, the word *toledot* in 2:4 is the most difficult to interpret as "descendants" or "children." Determining the meaning of the word is somewhat contingent on whether the verse concludes the first creation narrative or introduces a new section. Some claim that in this case, the formula does not serve as an introduction, but rather as a conclusion. Rashi suggested that the formula concludes the first creation narrative, so that here, the word *toledot* means "origins."[104] Alter also argues that the formula serves as a conclusion to what has been said so far, because the formula is similar to the first verse of Genesis, 1:1, and thus enfolds the first creation narrative within an envelope-like structure.[105]

This claim also appears in classic diachronic scholarship, dictating that the first part of the formula (2:4a) summarizes the first Creation narrative ascribed to P, while the second part (2:4b) opens the second Creation narrative ascribed to J.[106] The problem with this claim is that this is the only case of the formula marking the end of a passage, rather than a beginning, regardless of its authorship.[107] Moreover, this reading establishes chs. 2:5–4:26 as the only

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[104] Rashi on Gen 2:4, *Mikraot Gedolot HaKeter*. "These—what is mentioned above."

[105] Alter, *Genesis*, 7. Here, Alter translates the word *toledot* as "tale."

[106] See Driver, *Genesis*, 19; Speiser, *Genesis*, 7. It was later proposed that this formula reflects redaction that unifies and bridges the two accounts. See, for example, Stordalen, "Genesis 2,4," 175; R. Hendel, "Historical Context," in C. A. Evans, J. N. Lohr, and D. L. Petersen (eds.), *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 73, 77–76; and the survey of J. H. Gertz, "The Formation of the Primeval History," in C. A. Evans, J. N. Lohr, and D. L. Petersen (eds.), *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 113–18. At the same time, Gertz asserts that there are significant advantages in the approach that ascribes the two halves of 2:4 to two different sources, and see also: P. Guillaume, *Land and Calendar: The Priesrly Document From Genesis 1 to Joshua 18* (New York/London: T&T Clark 2009), 126. For synchronic attempts to explain the verse, see Cassuto, *Commentary,* 64; I. M. Kikawada and A. Quinn, *Before Abraham Was: The Unity of Genesis 1–11* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1985), 60.

[107] Skinner (*Genesis,* 39–41) explains his objection to the suggestion that the formula in this case serves as a summary by stating that the formula never describes the birth of the father; thus the meaning of *toledot* cannot be interpreted as "origin," and many agree. See B. Jacob, *Genesis*,

part of Genesis that is not framed by a *toledot* formula, deviating from the general structure of the book.[108] On the other hand, if the formula serves as a heading for ch. 2:4 onward, then ch. 1 and the first three verses of ch. 2 are excluded from the *toledot* framework of the book of Genesis.

Nonetheless, it is more likely that this formula serves as a heading to the narrative that follows it, opening the second creation narrative,[109] and this is supported by several literary features. Firstly, the first creation narrative is already concluded in 2:1–3, and it is difficult to understand the function or contribution of the additional conclusion, "these are the *toledot* of the heavens and earth."[110] Secondly, this verse is parallel to 1:1: "In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth" בראשית ברא אלהים את השמים ואת הארץ (1:1) // "These are the toledot of the heavens and the earth when they were created. In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens," אלה תולדות השמים והארץ בהבראם ביום עשות יהוה אלהים ארץ ושמים (2:4), which designates the formula as an opening parallel to the opening of the first creation narrative.[111]

This leads back to our original question: what is the meaning of the word *toledot* here, and what function does the formula serve? One possibility is that the word *toledot* means "descendants," depicting the works of creation as the metaphorical "children" of heaven and earth, as mentioned above. It can also be defined as "products," as Stordalen proposes, which implies that the narrative does not discuss creation of the world itself but what happened to the world after its creation.[112] Again, this interpretation is prob-

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14; F. M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 302; Childs, *Introduction*, 145; Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17,* 151; Dorsey, *Literary Structure*, 49; Stordalen, "Genesis 2,4," 171.

[108] See Carr, "Patterns," 165.

[109] Sweeney, "Genesis in the Context," 659.

[110] Grossman, "Further Comments about the Literary Structure of the Eden Narrative," *Beit Mikra* 56 (2011), 5–39 (9–10) [Hebrew].

[111] Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 183; J. L. Ska, "Genesis 2–3: Some Fundamental Questions," in K. Schmid and C. Riedweg (eds.), *Beyond Eden: the Biblical Story of Paradise (Genesis 2–3) and Its Reception History* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 1–27 (20). Note that the concluding point of the second creation narrative is given to debate. I follow those who demarcate the story from 2:4–3:25 based on its structure, cohesion and the plot continuity between chs. 2 and 3. See Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 49–50; Coats, *Genesis,* 51; Grossman, "Eden," 8; N. D. Mettinger, *The Eden Narrative* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 13–14; E. I. Van Wolde, *A Semiotic Analysis of Genesis 2–3: A Semiotic Theory and Method of Analysis Applied to the Story of the Garden of Eden* (SSN, 25; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1989), 72–74. Others have proposed that the second creation narrative concludes only in 4:26 and includes the story of Cain and Abel. See Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 183; Waltke, *Genesis*, 79–82. The claim that the second creation account ends in 2:25, and that ch. 3 begins a new story has also been raised, see von Rad, *Genesis*, 73, 87; Hamilton*, Genesis 1–17*, 150, 186–87.

[112] Stordalen, "Genesis 2,4," 175.

lematic because the works of creation are not described as the products of heaven and earth, and this idea is opposed to the theological approach that God is the creator—although He uses the earth as raw material, the earth is by no means the "parent" of creation, not even metaphorically. Another difficulty is that the *toledot* formula is immediately followed by the verse "and no shrub of the field was yet on earth and no grasses of the field had yet sprouted" (2:5), so that the products of heaven and earth are *not* described following the formula, at least not immediately.[113] In addition, this reading would somewhat diminish the sense that 2:4 onward is a creation narrative.[114]

I suggest that in this context, the word *toledot* mainly takes on the meaning of "chronicles"/"story" so that the formula introduces a narrative concerned with the creation of the world and the events that follow.[115] Indeed, the formula featuring heaven and earth as "father" precedes a narrative about the creation of the world. The use of a prepositional "ב" and the infinitive in construct state—"when they were created" בהבראם; "on the day that [the Lord God] made," ביום עשות—creates the impression that this formula precedes history itself; it introduces the very story of creation.

The problem with this reading is that the description of the actual world in the second creation narrative is relatively short when compared to the first creation account—which gradually, elaborately, describes the creation of the heavens, dry land, and so on—while emphasis is placed here on the creation of *man*. While the heading focuses on the "father," introducing the story of the creation of the world, it is not strictly congruous with the narrative focus that follows.

This problem, however, may be solved through the understanding that the formula hints to identification of the creation of the world with the creation of humankind, and emphasizes the

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[113] As the Abravanel contended: "And if we interpret the *toledot* of heaven and earth as referring to the rainfall and greenery mentioned afterwards, as Nachmanides interprets, it is problematic that what immediately follows is 'when no shrub of the field was yet on earth and no grasses of the field had yet sprouted,' with a *waw* of disassociation, which shows that it is a new subject rather than an explanation of the aforementioned *toledot*" (Y. Shaviv [ed.], *The Commentary of Rabbi Isaac Abravanel on the Torah, vol. 1: Genesis* [Jerusalem: Horeb, 2007], 128 [Hebrew]).

[114] This is raised by S. Galander, *The Book of Genesis*, vol. 1 (Raanana: Open University, 2010), 175 [Hebrew].

[115] As the Abravanel suggested in his commentary: "And the text said, these are the chronicles and the events it will mention afterwards, they are the *toledot* of the heavens and the earth when they were created, that is, from the day that they were created, and from the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens" (Y. Shaviv [ed.], *The Commentary of Rabbi Isaac Abravanel on the Torah, vol. 1: Genesis* [Jerusalem: Horeb, 2007], 155 [Hebrew]).

concept that the supreme objective of the creation of the world is the creation of humanity. This is what lies at the heart of the second creation narrative in the book of Genesis. This is already asserted at the opening of the second creation narrative, which ascribes the lack of plant growth to the absence of humanity: "for the LORD GOD had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was *no man* to till the ground" (2:5),[116] and continues two verses later with the description of man's creation: "Then the LORD GOD formed *man* from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being" (2:7). Thus, the creation of the world that the heading "these are the *toledot* of heaven and earth" refers to is described in the text as the creation of man, generating identification between the human and the world.

The understanding that the creation of humanity is central to the second creation narrative has long been recognized as one of the main characteristics of this narrative, which serves to distinguish it from the first creation account. The first account focuses on God's creation of nature with humankind presented as part of nature, while the second account focuses on the creation of humanity, with the rest of nature serving as its backdrop.[117]

This is reinforced by many aspects of the narrative: the first story describes the creation of humankind as the climax of creation, but focus lies solely on God's actions, while man is completely passive; while the second account focuses on man's indispensability to the world's existence.[118] In the first creation story, humankind is

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[116] It seems that the rhythm of the verse reaches a climax in the last part, its center of gravity found in the absence of any man to till the earth, which is a key word in chs. 2–3 (2:5, 6, 7, 9, 19; 3:17, 19, 23).

[117] Note that the difference of man's place in creation is only one of the well-known differences between the two accounts, which vary greatly in content, language, style and theology. For a survey of the differences between the two accounts, see Driver, *Introduction,* 35–36, 51–57; see also N. C. Habel, *Literary Criticism of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973), 18–27; A. Rofé, *Introduction to the Literature of the Hebrew Bible* (JBS, 9; Jerusalem: Simor, 2009), 166–67.

[118] Many cite this difference as proof for the distinct origins of the two accounts. For example, Driver (*Genesis,* 32) claims that the second story (J), is earlier and more primitive while the first story (P) is later, more organized, and seeks to primarily focus on God's actions. Later, it was proposed that the two stories were both edited by P, who saw importance in J's "primitive" story as well. See D. Patrick and A. Scult, *Rhetoric and Biblical Interpretation* (JSOTSup, 82; Sheffield: Almond Press, 1990), 105, 114; T. E. Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 33. According to another reading, which is based on the synchronic approach, the different accounts express two different perspectives of creation. For example, Soloveitchik focuses on the different descriptions of the creation of man and claims that they testify to two different, even contradicting aspects of the human spirit, represented in the two creation accounts as two different prototypes of humanity (J. B.

created last (1:26–27), while the second account mentions man's creation first (2:7). The word "man" appears only twice in the first account, as opposed to twenty four times in the second.[119] The latter account emphasizes how creation is entirely designed around man, without existence or purpose before man is created (2:5). Trees are described from a human perspective and designated for human benefit: "pleasant to the sight and good for food" (2:9). Animals, and eventually woman, are created by God in order to solve the problem of man's loneliness (18–24). The second creation account places man and his power of free choice at the center: he is expected to obey God's word on pain of death (2:16–17). Despite different opinions regarding its objective, man's centrality in this narrative is unanimously recognized.[120]

THE EXCLUSION OF THE FIRST CREATION NARRATIVE FROM THE TOLEDOT FRAMEWORK

Identifying the creation of the world with that of humanity in the second narrative, which describes human sin and their expulsion from Eden, explains why the *toledot* formula at the beginning of the narrative opens this chapter rather than the previous chapter. This is because the narrative *toledot* formulae in Genesis anticipate active sequences of events as well as the theme of selection and rejection. As mentioned above,[121] the narrative *toledot* formulae introduce only figures of the chosen line—Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph—and Adam, too, the protagonist of the second creation narrative, is characterized here as God's chosen creation. Inherently part of the notion of selection is that of rejection, which might hint at the idea of sin. Although there is not always explicit divine

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Soloveitchik, *The Lonely Man of Faith* [New York: Doubleday, 2006], 9–13 [Hebrew]). Tamarkin-Reis is convinced that the chapters represent different perspectives, similar to the classic film "Rashomon"—ch. 1 describes creation from God's perspective, while ch. 2 describes man's perspective (P. Tamarkin-Reis, "Genesis as Rashomon: the Creation as told by God and by Man," *BRev* 17 [2001], 26–33, 55). Möller focuses on the different theological perspectives of God generated through reading the two different narratives (K. Möller, "Images of God and Creation in Genesis 1–2," in J. A. Grant, A. Lo, and G. J. Wenham [eds.], *A God of Faithfulness: Essays in Honor of J. McConville on his 60th Birthday* [LHBOTS, 538; New York: T&T Clark, 2011], 3–29).

[119] In the first account: 1:26, 27; in the second account: 2:5, 7, 8, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25; 3:12, 17, 20, 21, 22, 24.

[120] For example: Van Wolde (*Semiotic Analysis*, 216–29) is convinced that the story's objective is human maturity. Grossman ("Eden," 11 onward) believes that the central narrative axis revolves around the question of human responsibility for their sin, in contrast to other opinions that emphasize the relationship between sin and punishment or the tragic nature of the fall of man.

[121] See p. 15 above.

explanation for the selection of the chosen line, the first *toledot* formula of the chosen line (5:1–32, from Adam to Noah via Seth) is placed after the story of Cain and Abel and the expulsion of Cain, and is adjacent to the verse mentioning the calling of God's name in the time of Enosh, son of Seth (4:26). This implies a connection between human deeds and divine selection.

The second creation account describes human sin and punishment in detail, introducing the moral breakdown of the human race. A narrative of this kind is aptly categorized under a heading related to consequences and chronicles as well as the concept of election and rejection; both intertwined themes are embedded in the narrative *toledot* formula. In contrast, the formula is not appropriate as a heading for the first creation narrative because it is not at all concerned with human deeds and man neither speaks nor commits any deeds liable to result in his election or rejection.[122] Therefore, this narrative does not open with the narrative *toledot* formula.

It may be even stated that the first creation narrative stands in conceptual opposition to the rest of Genesis, as it emphasizes the *acts of God* and the obedience of His creations, while most of the book of Genesis focuses upon *human* deeds and events. While the first creation account gives the impression of an ideal, sinless world, free of election and rejection, the second narrative depicts a flawed world with moral failings. This is structurally implied through the first account's lack of introductory *toledot* formula and its ensuing exclusion from the structure of the rest of Genesis. The fact that the narrative *toledot* formula appears for the first time at the beginning of the second creation narrative has fundamental literary significance related to the nature of the narrative it serves to introduce.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The word *toledot* in the *toledot* formula in Genesis may take on at least one of two meanings: "children" and "chronicles"/"story," which are related through the semantic field. Due to the polysemous nature of the word, the formula serves as an adaptable structural device in Genesis, delineating sections of the book, indicating important passages to the reader, and, through its repetition, unifying the book and binding it together. At the same time, it introduces new passages of varying character, thus highlighting the book's complexity and diversity with regard to its textual medium: genealogical lists appear alongside narratives. The narratives, however, always concern the chosen line, which may focus upon the sons of the specified father, the story of the father himself, or a

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[122] Diverse divine attitudes towards creation can be discerned in the first creation narrative, manifested, for one, in the bestowal of blessing upon only some creatures (1:22, 28), but there is no element of election and rejection in the moral sense, as there is in the second account.

narrative which concerns them both. The adaptable nature of the narrative *toledot* formula is expressed in its literary design: while each follows a fixed basic structure, "these are the *toledot* of X," each is varied with different additional phrases and details that illuminate its particular literary role and anticipate the nature of the ensuing narrative.

In this article I focused on the literary function of the narrative formula when it precedes passages that do not solely concern the sons of the specified father (2:4; 6:9; 25:19), proposing that in these instances, the formula's literary design hints to important features of the story that follows.

In the story of Noah, the formula focuses on Noah himself, indicating that the story to come will concern the specified father. The Isaac formula includes mention of Abraham as the father of Isaac, hinting that the narrative to follow generates two simultaneous narrative cycles: one concerning Isaac's sons, and one concerning Isaac himself. The *toledot* formula of heaven and earth's focus on their own creation hints at the main subject of the narrative to follow: the creation of the world, which places humankind and what befalls it at its center.

Understanding the literary function of these formulae casts three central issues related to the literary design of Genesis in a new light:

1. This analysis draws attention to an internal tension between opposite themes in the Flood narrative: the theme of renewal, and the theme of continuity. Noah is characterized as both a new person and a survivor of the old world. The post-flood world is presented as both a new creation and as a continuation of the pre-flood world. This tension is anticipated in the literary design of Noah's *toledot* formula which focuses on the father, and its following verse which notes the birth of his sons (6:9–10).

2. Through this analysis, we can recognize a literary unit centering on Isaac, which opens with the formula in 25:19, or, to be precise, with the substitution of Abraham's *toledot* formula with the phrase "Abraham was the father of Isaac," and ends in 28:9. Identifying a literary unit about Isaac within the patriarchal narrative cycle resolves the difficulties associated with the ostensible lack of a cycle devoted to Isaac, who is considered one of the three patriarchs in the Bible.

3. This analysis provides a literary explanation for the first creation narrative's (1:1–2:3) exclusion from the *toledot* framework due to its ideal nature, which focuses on the acts of God without description of human actions, sins or shortcomings and is therefore incompatible with the concept of selection and rejection inherent to the narrative *toledot* formulae. The theme of selection and rejection is

only introduced in the book of Genesis in the second creation narrative, which therefore opens with the narrative *toledot* formula, but its implications permeate the rest of the book of Genesis, and, ultimately, the entire Bible.