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NOT QUITE AT THE WELL: 2 SAMUEL 11 AS AN INVERTED BETROTHAL JOURNEY NARRATIVE

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Second Samuel 11 has elicited a great deal of discussion on its interpretation. The text contains a narrative account of events during the life and reign of King David that, according to the biblical record, directly resulted in the birth of the future monarch Solomon and had a significant impact on the course of the United Monarchy. Biblical scholars have employed a number of different methods to understand the narrative, such as contextual analysis,¹ source critical and genre studies,² and a number of studies that utilize literary and textual methodologies.³

1. See Randall C. Bailey, *David in Love and War: The Pursuit of Power in 2 Samuel 10–12* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990); Joseph Blenkinsopp, “Structure, Theme, and Motif in the Succession History (2 Samuel 11–20; 1 Kings 1–2) and the History of Human Origins (Genesis 1–11),” in *Treasures Old and New: Essays in the Theology of the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 102–19; Richard Gene Bowman, “The Crises of King David: Narrative Structures, Compositional Technique, and the Interpretation of II Samuel 8:15–20:26” (PhD diss., Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, 1981); James W. Flanagan, “Court History or Succession Document? A Study of 2 Samuel 9–20 and 1 Kings 1–2,” *JBL* 91 (1972): 172–81; “Kenneth R. R. Gros Louis, “The Difficulty of Ruling Well: King David of Israel” in *Literary Critical Studies of Biblical Texts* (Semeia 8; Missoula, Mont.: University of Montana, 1977), 15–33; Jared J. Jackson, “David’s Throne: Patterns in the Succession Story,” *CJT* 11 (1965): 183–95; R.N. Whybray, *The Succession Narrative: A Study of II Samuel 9–20; 1 Kings 1 and 2* (London: SCM Press, 1968); Hans J. L. Jensen, “Desire, Rivalry and Collective Violence in the ‘Succession Narrative,’” *JSOT* 55 (1992): 39–59; Leo G. Perdue, “Is There Anyone Left of the House of Saul . . . ?” Ambiguity and the Characterization of David in the Succession Narrative,” *JSOT* 30 (1984): 67–84; George P. Ridout, “Prose Compositional Techniques in the Succession Narrative (2 Sam. 7, 9–20; 1 Kings 1–2)” (PhD diss., Graduate Theological Union, 1971).

2. See R. A. Carlson, *David, the Chosen King*, trans. Eric J. Sharpe and Stanley Rudman (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1964); D. M. Gunn, *The Story of King David: Genre and Interpretation* (JSOT Supplement Series 6; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1982).

3. Alexander Izuchuwuku Abasili, “Was It Rape? The David and Bathsheba Pericope Re-examined,” *VT* 61 (2011): 1–15; Mieke Bal, “De-Disciplining the Eye.” *Critical Inquiry* 16 (1990): 506–31; J. Chankin-Gould, D’Ror, Derek Hutchinson, David Hilton Jackson, Tyler

In the scholarly community's efforts to interpret this text, no one has focused on the literary relationship between 2 Sam 11 and the betrothal scenes of Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Rachel, and Moses and Zipporah found in Gen 24:10–61, Gen 29:1–20 and Exod 2:15b–21. Scholars have regularly noted the structural similarity between these three passages, referring to the similarity as the “at the well” scene,⁴ the betrothal type-scene,⁵ and the betrothal journey narrative.⁶ This study will outline the common structure of these three betrothal journey narratives by examining previous work on the subject and by resolving disagreements through a close analysis of the texts. Then it will show that an inverted form of this narrative structure is present in 2 Sam 11.

This inversion of the narrative structure contrasts David's actions with those of Isaac, Jacob, and Moses. Whereas in the typical manifestations of the narrative the positive characteristics of the male characters such as their adherence to rules of hospitality and their willingness to be led by divine will are stressed, the structural inversion in 2 Sam 11 emphasizes David's failure to provide hospitality and his attempt to control the situation and “take” something that is not his to take, contrary to divine will. The literary relationship of the texts and the step-by-step progression of the narrative structural schema emphasize David's errors repeatedly throughout the progression of the

D. Mayfield, Leah Rediger Schulte, Tammi J. Schneider, and E. Winkelman. “The Sanctified ‘Adulteress’ and Her Circumstantial Clause: Bathsheba's Bath and Self-Consecration in 2 Samuel 11,” *JSOT* 32 (2008): 339–352; Carole Fontaine; “The Bearing of Wisdom on the Shape of 2 Samuel 11–12 and 1 Kings 3,” *JSOT* 34 (1986): 61–77; Moshe Garsiel, “The Story of David and Bathsheba: A Different Approach,” *CBQ* 55 (1993): 244–62; Steven L. McKenzie “Why Did David Stay Home? An Exegetical Study of 2 Samuel 11:1,” in *Raising Up a Faithful Exegete: Essays in Honor of Richard D. Nelson* (ed. K. L. Noll and Brooks Schramm; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2010), 149–58; George G. Nicol, “The Alleged Rape of Bathsheba: Some Observations on Ambiguity in Biblical Narrative,” *JSOT* 73 (1997): 43–54; Hélène Nutkovicz “Propos autour de la mort d'un enfant: 2 Samuel XI, 2–XIII, 24,” *VT* 54 (2004): 104–18; Joel Rosenberg, “The Institutional Matrix of Treachery in 2 Samuel 11” in *Narrative Research on the Hebrew Bible* (ed. George W. Coats and Anne M. Solomon; Semeia 46; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1989), 103–16; Wolfgang Roth, “You Are the Man! Structural Interaction in 2 Samuel 10–12,” in *Literary Critical Studies of Biblical Texts* (Semeia 8; Missoula, Mont.: University of Montana, 1977), 1–13; David Wright, “David Autem Remansit in Hierusalem: Felix Coniunctio!” in *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom* (ed. David P. Wright, David Noel Freedman, and Avi Hurvitz; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 215–30; Gale A Yee, “Fraught with Background: Literary Ambiguity in II Samuel 11,” *Int* 42 (1988): 240–53.

4. See Robert C. Culley, *Studies in the Structure of Hebrew Narrative* (Semeia 3; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 41–43.

5. Robert Alter, “Biblical Type-Scenes and the Uses of Convention,” *Critical Inquiry* 5 (1978): 355–68.

6. Michael W. Martin, “Betrothal Journey Narratives,” *CBQ* 70 (2008): 505–23. The term “betrothal journey narrative” will be used throughout this paper.

narrative and contrast his negative characterization with the positive portrayal of the Israelite heroes of the other texts.

At the Well

In order to assess 2 Sam 11 as an inverted betrothal journey narrative, it is necessary to have an accurate outline of the elements that constitute the narrative type. To create such an outline, the plot elements suggested in previous studies will be examined and modified to more closely align with the texts themselves. There is a measure of difficulty in establishing parameters for such a schema, particularly because, as Alter and others have argued, variations within the schema can be intentionally employed to communicate something to the audience.⁷ It is natural to find some discrepancies between individual accounts. This analysis will include within the schema only those plot elements that are apparent in a close reading of a majority of the narrative texts identified as containing the schema, those that minimize the textual space between elements within the schema, and elements whose order within the context of the schema are consistent in the majority (two of the three) of the texts. This process will be demonstrated as it is applied below.

In his 1976 monograph *Studies in the Structure of Hebrew Narrative*, Robert C. Culley outlines the plot of Gen 24:10–33, Gen 29:1–14, and Exod 2:15–21 and develops an outline composed of the elements common to all three scenes.⁸ Culley calls the structure “at the well,” as each story contains a meeting at a well which leads to a marriage. His study indicates seven elements common to the three narratives:

1. The religious hero (or representative) enters a distant, foreign land.
2. He stops at a well.
3. The girl(s) come(s) to the well.
4. He does something for the girl(s).
5. The girl(s) return(s) home and report(s) what happened.
6. The stranger is brought to the household of the girl(s).
7. Subsequently, it is reported that a marriage occurs between the stranger at the well (or the person for whom he is acting) and the girl (or one of the girls) at the well.⁹

7. Alter, “Biblical Type-Scenes,” 355–68.

8. Culley, *Hebrew Narrative*, 41–43.

9. *Ibid.*, 42–43.

Culley does not discuss 2 Sam 11. Other than the introductory statement that “the parallels to be used are well known, and fairly few in number,”¹⁰ Culley does not indicate why he chose to include these three stories and not others in his study. He does mention, however, that his work on structural patterns is meant to show the possibility of an oral background for these and other biblical narratives. With this as his main purpose, the examination of inverted narratives is not necessary.

The elements of Culley’s schema can be found in the following passages: entering into a foreign land (Gen 24:10; Gen 29:1; Exod 2:15b), stopping at the well (Gen 24:11; Gen 29:2; Gen 2:15b), the girl(s) come(s) to the well (Gen 24:15; Gen 29:6, 9; Exod 2:16), the stranger does something for the girl(s) (Gen 24:22; Gen 29:10; Exod 2:17), the girl(s) return(s) home and report(s) what has happened (Gen 24:28; Gen 29:12; Exod 2:18–19), the stranger is brought to the house of the girl(s) (Gen 24:31–32; Gen 29:13; Exod 2:20–21), and a marriage is reported (Gen 24:67; Gen 29:28; Exod 2:21).

Several years after Culley’s work was published, Robert Alter wrote an article entitled “Biblical Type-Scenes and the Uses of Convention” which acknowledges the value of Culley’s observations of common structure but interprets their presence differently.¹¹ Whereas Culley sees evidence for an oral background to the text, Alter finds a purposefully deployed literary convention which he refers to as a type-scene.¹² According to Alter, a type-scene is a literary convention in which certain types of narrative episodes, such as the birth of a hero, a dying testament, or an initiatory trial, were dependent upon the “manipulation of a fixed constellation of a predetermined set of motifs.”¹³ Alter suggests that “both [the author] and his audience were aware that the scene had to unfold in particular circumstances, according to a fixed order. If some of those circumstances were altered or suppressed, or if the scene were actually omitted, that communicated something to the audience.”¹⁴ Alter dem-

10. *Ibid.*, 33.

11. Alter, “Biblical Type-Scenes,” 355–68. This article was printed with some modifications as the third chapter of Alter’s book. See Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 55–78.

12. Alter stated clearly that he was borrowing the concept of a type-scene from scholarship on the ancient Greek literature associated with Homer, but with “a couple of major modifications.” See Alter, “Biblical Type-Scenes,” 358.

13. Alter, “Biblical Type-Scenes,” 359.

14. *Ibid.* Since Alter, a number of works identifying type-scenes and their patterns in biblical and, in some cases, non-biblical ancient Near Eastern literature have been published. See James Williams, “The Beautiful and the Barren: Conventions in Biblical Type-Scenes,” *JOT* 17 (1980): 107–19; Esther Fuchs, “Structure and Patriarchal Functions in the Biblical Betrothal Type-Scene: Some Preliminary Notes,” *JFSR* 3 (1987):7–13; Robert H. O’Connell, “Proverbs 7:16–17: A Case of Fatal Deception in a ‘Woman and the Window’

onstrates his thesis in the same three “at the well” narratives Culley examines and identifies five elements which he argues define the narrative structure:

1. The future bridegroom or his surrogate journeys to a foreign land.
2. There he encounters a girl—the term ‘na’arah’ invariably occurs unless the maiden is identified as so-and-so’s daughter—or girls at a well.
3. Someone, either the man or the girl, then draws water from the well.
4. Afterward, the girl or girls rush to bring home the news of the stranger’s arrival. The verbs “hurry” and “run” are given recurrent emphasis.
5. Finally, a betrothal is concluded between the stranger and the girl, in the majority of instances, only after he has been invited to a meal.¹⁵

Alter also does not discuss 2 Sam 11, nor does he discuss the presence of the narrative structure in any texts outside of the three treated by Culley. His article is in part a direct response and correction of several of Culley’s assertions, and it is possible that Alter simply analyzes these three texts because Culley does the same. Alter’s structure combines several elements that Culley separates (Alter has one element, an encounter at a well, whereas Culley has two—the hero stopping at a well and the girl or girls approaching).

More significantly, Alter’s structure specifically indicates the drawing of water as a feature of the narrative structure whereas Culley’s outline only specifies the hero doing something for the girl or girls. A close reading reveals that an act of drawing water, by the stranger or by the girl, is indeed specifically included in each text (Gen 24:16, 20; Gen 29:10; Exod 2:17). The drawing of water as an act of hospitality is an important part of the overall structure. One of the parties is hospitably assisting the other by drawing the water and either offering the other a drink or watering their livestock.

Culley’s final element is the reporting of an actual marriage, while Alter’s element includes a betrothal. When examining the texts, the betrothal element appears in much greater proximity to the rest of the elements in the three narratives¹⁶ than does the reporting of the marriage. In each of the narratives, the reporting of the marriage occurs only much later in the text, after a number of

Type-scene,” *VT* (1991): 235–41; Brian Britt, “Prophetic Concealment in a Biblical Type Scene,” *CBQ* 64 (2002): 37–58; Min Suc Kee, “The Heavenly Council and Its Type-scene,” *JSOT* 31 (2007): 259–73; Jonathan Kruschwitz, “The Type-Scene Connection between Genesis 38 and the Joseph Story,” *JSOT* 36 (2012): 383–410; George Savran, “Theophany as Type Scene,” *Prooftexts* 23 (2003): 119–49; Robert Alter, “How Conventions Help Us Read: The Case of the Bible’s Annunciation Type-Scene,” *Prooftexts* 3 (1983): 115–30.

15. Alter, “Biblical Type-Scenes,” 359.

16. In Gen 24, the betrothal element appears immediately following the penultimate element, the girl returning home (Gen 24:28–30), separated only by one verse (29) or ten

other events transpire which are not related to the overall narrative structure.¹⁷ Further, Alter omits the element in which the stranger is brought to the house of the girl(s). A close examination of the texts reveals that there is an invitation but no word that can be translated 'to bring' in Gen 24 and that there is only a suggestion of an invitation in Exod 2. Since the element is only present in one of the three narratives, it will not be included in the narrative structural schema. Another significant difference of Alter's work is that key-words are included as part of the common structure (he notes the presence of רץ, נערה, and מהר), where Culley deals only with plot elements. The significance of key-words as a part of the narrative structure will be explored further at the end of this section.

In 1984 Kenneth T. Aitken published an article primarily devoted to establishing the development of the tradition of Gen 24.¹⁸ A portion of his analysis deals with the pattern shared by Gen 24, Gen 29:1–14, and Exod 2:15b–21 in which he identifies nine elements:

1. The protagonist travels to a distant land.
2. He waits by a well.
3. A girl(s) approaches the well.
4. They encounter one another at the well.
5. The identity of the girl is revealed to the protagonist.
6. The girl(s) return(s) home and tell(s) what happened.
7. The householder comes (sends back the girls) to the well.
8. The protagonist is brought to the some of the girl(s).
9. A marriage ensues.

Like Culley and Alter, Aitken does not discuss 2 Sam 11. As to why he analyzes only these three texts, Aitken says only that others have discerned certain similarities in these texts. Aitken's narrative structure schema splits the arrival of the male, the arrival of the female, and the encounter at the well into three separate elements, where Culley has two and Alter only one. A close reading of the text reveals that in each of the three narratives, the male does

separate words. In Gen 29 and Exod 2 there is no break whatsoever between the girl rushing home and the beginning of the betrothal element (Gen 29:12–13; Gen 2:18–19).

17. In Gen 24 there is a textual space of 24 verses (33–66) or 456 words between Culley's sixth element (stranger brought to the house) and the final reporting of marriage. In Genesis 29 there is a space of 14 verses (14–27) or 159 separate words. In Exodus 2 there is no space; the reporting of the marriage takes place immediately following the bringing of the stranger (Moses) to the house.

18. Kenneth T. Aitken, "The Wooing of Rebekah: A Study in the Development of the Tradition," *JOT* 30 (1984): 3–23.

wait at the well for some period of time and in fact normally participates in some sort of activity prior to ever meeting the girl or girls (in Gen 24:11–14 the servant of Abraham prays for divine assistance in identifying the correct bride; in Gen 29:4–8 Jacob speaks with shepherds gathered at the well; in Exod 2:15b Moses simply sits down by the well). Further, in each of the three narratives the approach of the female is specifically mentioned separately from the encounter itself (Gen 24:15–16; Gen 29:6, 9; Exod 2:16), justifying the division into three separate plot elements.

Aitken also adds two elements not identified by Culley or Alter. In two of the narratives the identity of the girl is revealed to the protagonist (Gen 24:23; Gen 29:6; Aitken notes that this element is absent in Exod 2).¹⁹ Aitken's addition, however, is not in line with the current data because its presence within the narrative structure varies between the two scenes. In Gen 24, the identity of Rebekah is not revealed to Abraham's servant until he inquires who she is and she answers. This occurs after her approach, their encounter, and her drawing of water for him, each of these actions corresponding to an element of the narrative structure. In Gen 29, Jacob learns Rachel's identity from the shepherds when she approaches, before their encounter and before his drawing of water. Elements of the narrative structure can vary in their precise position within the text, but since this element occurs only in two narratives, it would be implausible to speculate on its proper location or whether it is an actual part of the schema at all. For this reason, it will not be included within the narrative structural schema used in this study.

Aitken's second addition to the narrative structure is an element in which the householder or the girl(s) come(s) back to the well. This is present in two of the narratives (Gen 24:30; Gen 29:13) and strongly implied in the third (Reuel instructs his daughters to invite the man to eat in Exod 2:20). The principles of hospitality are manifest in this feature in the proper treatment of a guest or stranger. Like the element regarding the drawing of water, this feature emphasizes the importance of proper hospitality in the betrothal journey narrative.

The most recent study to address the shared structural elements of these three texts is that of Michael W. Martin in 2008.²⁰ Quoting Alter extensively, Martin posits the existence of a betrothal type-scene called the "Betrothal Journey Narrative," consisting of twelve elements:

1. The groom-to-be travels to a foreign country, either in flight from or commissioned by his kin.
2. He meets a young woman or young women at a well.

19. Aitken, "The Wooing of Rebekah," 21.

20. Martin, "Betrothal Journey Narratives," 505–23.

3. Someone draws water.
4. A gift is given or a service is performed that ingratiates the suitor with the woman and/or her family.
5. The suitor reveals his identity.
6. The young woman/women rush home with news of his arrival.
7. Someone from the family returns to greet and/or invite the suitor.
8. A betrothal is arranged, usually in connection with a meal.
9. The suitor resides with his bride's kin, sometimes begetting children.
10. The suitor returns, usually commissioned by the bride's kin.
11. The suitor is received by his kin at the end of his journey.
12. The suitor resides with his kin, sometimes begetting children.²¹

Martin lays out the presence of the twelve elements of this narrative structure not only in the three narratives treated originally by Culley, but also in the book of Ruth, the narrative of Saul in Zuph (1 Sam 9:1–10:16), the book of Tobit, and the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well in the Gospel of John (John 2:1–4:54).²²

Martin's schema contains many of the elements previously identified, but he adds several new elements and modifies others. Martin's first element involves traveling to a foreign land, but he adds that this journey is either in flight from or commissioned by his kin. Abraham's servant is commissioned by Abraham to find a wife for Isaac (Gen 24:2–9), Jacob is sent on his journey by Isaac to find a wife for himself, although this detail is much earlier in the text (Gen 28:1–5), and Moses flees Egypt from both his adopted brother and his true kin, the Hebrews (Exod 2:14–15a). This condition of the journey element is found in all three narratives. In two of the narratives it minimizes the textual space between the other elements. It will be included within the narrative structural schema of this study.²³ Martin also includes an element containing a gift or service that ingratiates the suitor with the woman or her family. This is found in all three narrative texts (Abraham's servant gives Rebekah gifts in Gen 24:22; Jacob moves the stone which covers the well in Gen 29:10a; Moses helps the daughters of Reuel when the shepherds drive them away in

21. *Ibid.*, 508–9.

22. For the purposes of this study, only the three original narratives (Genesis 24, Genesis 29 and Exodus 2) and the surrounding text will be analyzed.

23. In Gen 24 and Exodus 2, the condition relating to the commission or flight from kin is found immediately preceding the journey itself. In the narrative of Gen 29 the details on the commission occur much earlier, there is a textual space of seventeen verses (28:6–22) and 252 separate words exists between the commission and the journey element itself, however, since this occurs in only one of the narratives the variation can be viewed as purposeful.

Exod 2:2:17b). Its position within the context of the overall schema is constant in two of the narratives (it occurs after the meeting or encounter and before the drawing of water in Gen 29 and Exod 2), which suggests it is a legitimate part of the narrative structure. Martin also adds an element in which the suitor reveals his identity: Abraham's servant reveals his identity in a prayer uttered within Rebekah's presence (Gen 24:27) and Jacob reveals his identity as a kinsman in a scene of joy (Gen 29:11–12a). This revelation of identity, however, is entirely absent from Exod 2. Martin states that this variation of the narrative structural schema is "a deliberate omission, serving as commentary on the larger problem that has arisen in the story of the exodus, the failure of Moses' own people to recognize him as one of their own and therefore as their deliverer."²⁴ Because this element is present in the other two narrative texts it will be included.

Martin identifies four additional elements at the end of the narrative structural schema. In these features the suitor resides with his bride's kin, sometimes begetting children (Gen 24:54b; Gen 29:14–30:24; Exod 2:21–22); the suitor then returns, usually commissioned by the bride's kin (Gen 24:56–61; Gen 30:25–31:55; Exod 4:18–26); the suitor is received by his kin at the end of his journey (Gen 24:62–66; Gen 33:1–16; Exod 4:27); then the suitor resides with his kin, sometimes begetting children (Gen 24:67; Gen 33:17–18; Exod 4:28–31). In the narrative of Abraham's servant and Rebekah, there is no textual space between the schema and these elements. In the narrative of Jacob and Rachel and that of Moses and Zipporah, there is significant textual space between these elements and the rest of the narrative structure.²⁵ Nonetheless, since there is enough textual continuity connecting the elements, they will be included within the narrative structural schema of this study.

In their studies, Culley, Aitken, and Martin include narrative plot elements in their discussion of the similarities between these three texts. Alter also includes certain key words which, he argued, contributed to the overall type-scene. In two of the three narratives, the physical appearance of the woman is described with some variant of the phrase טובת מראה מאד. Rebekah is described at the moment of her approach to the well as טובת מראה מאד (Gen

24. Martin, "Betrothal Journey Narratives," 520.

25. In Exodus, the textual space between Martin's element of the suitor's residing with his bride's family and the element of the suitor's return by his kin is 42 verses (Exod 2:23–4:17) and 690 separate words. But there is no space between these elements in the narrative of Jacob and Rachel or in the narrative of Abraham's servant and Rebekah. Similarly, there is a large textual space between the element of the suitors return and the element of the suitor's reception in the narrative of Jacob and Rachel, 33 verses and 453 separate words, but there is no textual space between the same elements in Exodus.

24:16), and the same root is used with the addition of יפה to describe Rachel (Gen 29:17).²⁶ Further, Alter points out the supposed significance of the identification of the woman in which “the term ‘na’arah’ invariably occurs unless the maiden is identified as so-and-so’s daughter.”²⁷ The term “na’arah” occurs in only one of the three texts (the description of Rebekah in Gen 24:16), and so will not be included as part of the narrative structural schema of this study. The identification of the girl as someone’s daughter occurs in the identification of Rebekah as the daughter of Bethuel (Gen 24:15), the identification of Rachel as the daughter of Laban (Gen 29:5–6, 10), and the identification of Zipporah as a daughter of the priest of Midian (Exod 2:16). Alter also identifies two key-words, מהר “hurry” and רץ “run,” which occur when the girl or girls go home to tell of the strangers arrival and are seen with Rebekah (מהר in Gen 24:18, 20 and רץ in 24:28), with Rachel (רץ in Gen 29:12), and with the daughters of Reuel (מהר in Exod 2:18).

Several other key-words not discussed by Alter can be included in the schema. Another key-word is שקה “to draw.” This key-word occurs within the element where water is drawn to care for animals in all three narratives (Gen 24:18; Gen 29:10; Exod 2:17). The root אכל “to eat” appears when Abraham’s servant eats with Rebekah’s family (Gen 24:33) and when Reuel tells his daughters to invite Moses back for a meal (Exod 2:20). The root שתה “to drink” appears when Rebekah gives the servant of Abraham water to drink (Gen 24:18) and for the משחה “feast” that is prepared for Jacob before his first wedding (Gen 29:22). Each time this root appears it is in a portion of the text when people are preparing for a betrothal or marriage. In addition, the verb הרה “to conceive” describes the conception and pregnancy of Rebekah (Gen 24:21), Leah (four times in Gen 29:32–35), Bilhah (twice in Gen 30:5, 7), and finally Rachel (Gen 30:23). That הרה describes the conceptions of Leah and Bilhah before that of Rachel, who as the girl at the well would be the one expected to conceive according to the conventions of the narrative structural schema, emphasizes Rachel’s infertility.

26. The key words are suppressed in the scene of Moses and Zipporah. This is done to diminish the personal involvement and feeling of Moses, which reinforces what Alter pointed out was the tendency to hold “Moses the man and his personal involvement at a distance.” The suppression also reinforces the lack of interest in Zipporah in the narrative in general. Alter noted that Zipporah’s “independent character and her relationship with Moses will play no significant role in the subsequent narrative.” On both points, see Alter, “Biblical Type-Scenes,” 364. George W. Coats also points out that the narrative focuses more on the development of a relationship between Moses and his father-in-law than Moses and his wife. See George W. Coats, *Moses: Heroic Man, Man of God* (JSOTSup 57; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 49–53.

27. Alter, “Biblical Type-Scenes,” 359.

This study's evaluation of the plot elements and key-words identified both in previous discussions and its own research suggests the following elements for the narrative structural schema of the betrothal journey narrative:

1. The groom-to-be travels to a foreign country, either in flight from or commissioned by his kin.
2. He waits by a well, normally participating in some sort of activity.
3. A girl (or girls) approaches the well; her physical appearance will be described using some form of the key phrase טובת מראה מאד.
4. They encounter one another at the well; the maiden is identified as so-and-so's daughter.
5. Someone, either the man or the girl, then draws water from the well.
6. A gift is given or a service is performed that ingratiates the suitor with the woman or her family. The key-word שקה is used.
7. The suitor reveals his identity.
8. Afterward the girl or girls rush home to bring the news of the stranger's arrival. The verbs מהר "hurry" and רץ "run" are given recurrent emphasis.
9. Someone from the family returns to greet and/or invite the suitor.
10. A betrothal is concluded between the stranger and the girl, in the majority of instances, only after he has been invited to a meal. The description of the meal may include the roots אכל 'to eat' and שתה 'to drink.'
11. The suitor resides with his bride's kin, sometimes begetting children. The verb הרה often appears around or following this element.
12. The suitor returns, usually commissioned by the bride's kin.
13. The suitor is received by his kin at the end of his journey.
14. The suitor resides with his kin, sometimes begetting children.

The Inverted Narrative Structural Schema in 2 Sam 11

This study will demonstrate that an inverted form of this narrative structural schema exists within 2 Sam 11. This phenomenon is not without precedent in the Hebrew Bible. Uwe F.W. Bauer discusses the possibility that "already existing literary genres were transformed in order to generate a new literary product, resulting in a generic inversion."²⁸ Bauer shows in her article how three of the six typical elements of the Hebrew Bible "spy story" identi-

28. Uwe F.W. Bauer, "Judges 18 as an Anti-Spy Story in the Context of an Anti-Conquest Story: The Creative Usage of Literary Genres," *JSOT* 88 (2000): 37-47. For a discussion on the possibility of an anti-type of hospitality related to Genesis 19 in Judges 19, see Stuart Lasine, "Guest and Host in Judges 19: Lot's Hospitality in an Inverted World," *JSOT* 29 (1984): 37-59; and for a discussion on the possibility of an anti-type of Abraham's

fied by Siegfried Wagner²⁹ are used atypically in Judg 18. In order to attain a correct understanding of Judg 18, according to Bauer, the potential for the creation of an anti-story must be recognized. Bauer's anti-story is a narrative that invokes plot elements and circumstances typical of a certain story type where crucial features of the story are changed giving the story an inverted meaning. This section of the study will utilize a technique similar to Bauer's by searching 2 Sam 11 for atypical manifestations of the elements of the betrothal journey narrative identified above. By showing that a majority of the elements and key-words are present in an atypical or inverted manner or are deliberately suppressed as part of the text's communication to the audience, this study will argue that 2 Sam 11 is an anti-betrothal story or an inverted betrothal journey narrative.

Inversion of Elements

The meaning of the first few lines in 2 Sam 11 is much debated. It is not clear whether the temporal clause *ויהי לתשובת השנה לעת צאת המלכים* in 11:1 should be understood as a remark on the typical practice of kings going out to war at a certain time period or simply stating that a year had passed since the marshaling of the Aramean kings in 2 Sam 10.³⁰ The issue is further complicated by the question of which reading, *המלכים* or *המלאכים* ought to be preferred.³¹ These semantic issues will not be treated in this study, because they are not necessary for the purposes of identifying elements of the narrative structural schema. These opening lines are the first step in structural inversion. They recall the idea of a journey, which is the opening element of the betrothal journey narrative. But it is significant that David does not go on a journey as the narrative structural schema would suggest; instead, it is emphasized that David did not go anywhere: *והוא ישב בירושלם*. This inversion is further

career in Genesis 14 in Isaiah 41, see Gwilym H. Jones, "Abraham and Cyrus: Type and Anti-Type?" *VT* 22 (1972): 304–19.

29. Siegfried Wagner, "Die Kundschaftergesichten im Alten Testament," *ZAW* 76 (1964): 255–69.

30. See Garsiel, "The Story of David and Bathsheba: A Different Approach," 244–62; McKenzie, "Why Did David Stay Home: An Exegetical Study of 2 Samuel 11:1," in Noll and Schramm, *Raising Up a Faithful Exegete*, 149–58. McKenzie is citing P. Kyle McCarter, who summarizes the varying interpretations and states that the evidence best fits the reading indicating it had been a year since the Aramean kings had marched out to the aid of the Ammonites. See P. Kyle McCarter, *II Samuel* (AB 9; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 279, 284–85.

31. For more on this, see J. P. Fokkelman, *King David* (Vol 1 of *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel*; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1981), 50. See also Joel Rosenberg, "The Institutional Matrix of Treachery," *Semeia* 46 (1989): 103–16.

stressed by the text when it describes others who journeyed at this time, including Joab and כל־ישראל.

In typical betrothal narratives, the male waits by a well, normally participating in some sort of activity. David arises and goes out onto his roof and “paces back and forth” יתהלך (11:2). He is not at a well. The lack of the well and its replacement with another water feature is part of the inversion as will be shown. David is pacing, an activity that could be associated with restlessness or waiting. When the female approaches, according to the next element, it is not done intentionally. Rather it is the image of the woman, bathing, that captures the gaze of David. He finds himself voyeuristically gazing upon an unnamed woman in a moment of intimacy, and the image of a well is replaced with a different water source, a bath.

The encounter between the male and female appears, but it is not the familiar meeting at a well that includes the pleasant hospitality of one party drawing water for another, the element typical of betrothal narratives. This encounter is not a familiar meeting at a well that includes the pleasant hospitality of one party drawing water for another as the narrative structural normally includes. This scene contains the jarring picture of a king invading the privacy of one of his subjects using water in the private setting of a bath, a marked disruption of hospitality on David's part.³² Water is drawn, but not to serve the other party or to feed flocks. The woman is bathing herself, and if she is indeed washing after her menstrual period, then, as J. Cheryl Exum suggests, “We can guess where she is touching.”³³ The text depicts the woman in an intimate and normally private act, and David's interruption of that privacy is an act of inhospitality and a significant departure from the expected drawing of water as a gesture of hospitality, continuing the inversion of the narrative structural schema.

32. Some scholars contend that Bathsheba was on the roof as part of an attempt to seduce David or otherwise was complicit in the affair. For proponents of this view see Bailey, *David in Love and War*, 83–88; Abasili, “Was It Rape? The David and Bathsheba Pericope Re-Examined,” 1–15; Nicol, “The Alleged Rape of Bathsheba,” 43–54. For those who support the idea that the intercourse was rape or Bathsheba was not complicit in the affair, see Richard M. Davidson, “Did King David Rape Bathsheba?: A Case Study in Narrative Theology,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 17 (2006):81–95; Garsiel, “The Story of David and Bathsheba,” 244–62; K. L. Noll, *The Faces of David* (JSOTSup 242; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 59; Trevor Dennis, *Sarah Laughed: Women's Voices in the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 140–55; J. Cheryl Exum, *Fragmented Women: Feminist (Sub)versions of Biblical Narratives* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1993), 170–76.

33. Exum, *Fragmented Women*, 175.

In other manifestations of the betrothal journey narrative the suitor reveals his identity after conversing with the female.³⁴ David, on the other hand, reveals his identity in a completely different manner. He cannot do so as part of a normal interaction or exchange of hospitality because no such thing has taken place. The woman is not aware of any interaction at all. She has not seen nor talked with David. Instead, the revelation of identity must occur in some other way. David sends messengers who bring Bathsheba to the palace. David reveals his identity to Bathsheba (11:4).³⁵ But this is not one member of a conversation revealing his identity to the other. Instead, we have a voyeur revealing his identity and desires to the object of his gaze. Furthermore, whereas the meeting normally takes place incidentally, this meeting is forced by David. The motif of David forcing his will or his “taking” in this pericope is a major part of the negative characterization of David’s actions in the text and will be more directly emphasized by Nathan in his rebuke of David in 2 Sam 12.³⁶ The contrast of David’s taking with the passive obedience of the Israelite patriarchs and Moses further emphasizes David’s inappropriate behavior.

After David reveals his identity to Bathsheba, the text states that ותבוא אליו (11:4). Scholars have disputed whether this means that Bathsheba was the victim of forcible rape or that the intercourse was consensual.³⁷ This is followed by the simple clause ותשב אל-ביתה “and she returned to her house” (11:4). Here is what Alter would call the deliberate suppression of an element. There is no rushing home, no appearance of the key-words מהר “hurry” nor רץ “run,” that appear in the other three narratives.³⁸ For what cause does Bathsheba have to run home? This is not a young woman rushing to her guardian to tell of a meeting with an interesting stranger who turns out to be a prospective husband. This is a married woman returning to her home after either willfully committing adultery or being raped. Her husband is not home because he is at war. There is no one to tell about the meeting even if Bathsheba has some motivation to do so. This element of the schema is normally associated with

34. This element is suppressed in the Exodus narrative because it fits with the idea that Moses is not identified by his own people, as their deliverer. See Martin, “Betrothal Journey Narratives,” 512–14.

35. The prior relationship between David and Bathsheba is not explicitly indicated in the text. The revelation of identity here is not necessarily the revelation of a stranger to another, but rather the revelation of David as an individual who has been watching the woman; the revelation that she has had an “encounter” with someone though she was unaware.

36. David Janzen, “The Condemnation of David’s ‘Taking’ in 2 Samuel 12:1–14,” *JBL* 131 (2012): 209–20.

37. See note 28.

38. Alter, “Biblical Type-Scenes,” 359.

excitement and a desire to share what has transpired. In 2 Sam 11 both are absent. Bathsheba is conspicuously silent and the typical structure is inverted.

At this point, the expected element of the schema is the return of a family member to speak to the suitor. Sometimes the girl or girls are instructed by the father to return, as in Exod 2, but more often the father or male family member comes himself. In this narrative, it is not Bathsheba's father who comes to greet a potential suitor for his daughter, but Bathsheba's husband, summoned from the front lines of war against the Ammonites, that returns to Jerusalem to speak with David (11:7). This is another reminder of the impropriety of David's encounter and relationship with Bathsheba. The presence of Bathsheba's husband underlines that the woman is already married. Uriah comes not because he has heard about a suitor or an act of hospitality, but rather because he is summoned by David. The cause of the summons is ostensibly to report on the war, but more realistically to cover up David's illicit sexual relations by obscuring the parentage of Bathsheba's unborn child. That David summons Uriah contrasts with the typical voluntary return of the girl or family member, further emphasizing that David is forcing the situation and "taking," rather than accepting what God is willing to give him.

In the typical texts, the next element of the narrative structural schema is the arrangement of a betrothal between the woman and the male suitor accompanied by a meal. In 2 Sam 11, it is David who seeks to arrange for Uriah to have sexual intercourse with his wife, a false shadow of a betrothal, in order to remove suspicion about the parentage of the child. At first, David simply tells Uriah *רד לביתך ורחץ רגליך* (11:8). The phrase *רחץ רגליך* can be seen as a euphemism for sexual intercourse. It also signifies hospitality, as in the story of Lot extending hospitality to the messengers in Gen 19:2 by telling them to spend the night and *ורחצו רגליכם*. David does not offer Uriah hospitality at his own house, but he inhospitably expects Uriah to take care of himself.

As noted earlier, hospitality is a prevalent idea within betrothal journey narratives. The drawing of water found in each scene contains a strong idea of hospitality towards an unknown stranger. Genesis 24:32 emphasizes this further when Laban provides for Abraham's servant to wash his feet. David's lack of hospitality first in his intrusion upon Bathsheba's privacy and throughout the narrative is emphasized by his failure to show hospitality to Uriah. Even in the narrative structural element regarding the gift, in which David sends a *מִשְׁאָח* to Uriah,³⁹ David is not motivated by hospitality but by an attempt to manipulate Uriah, signifying a lack of hospitality (11:8). The purpose of

39. The appearance of the element is later than might be expected, but Martin noted that this element seems to be more flexible in its appearance. It varied in position in the

David's gift is not to help the woman or her family as in the case of Jacob opening the well for Rachel or Moses driving off the shepherds on behalf of the daughters of Reuel, nor is it a response to hospitality such as the gift of jewelry to Rebekah from Abraham's servant. David's "hospitality" is a part of his plot to cover up his actions by manipulating Uriah into having sex with Bathsheba.

In the next narrative structural element, the suitor resides with his bride's kin. Abraham's servant stays in the house of Laban for one night before returning to his master with Rebekah in the morning (Gen 24:54); Jacob served and lived with Laban for fourteen years and a longer unspecified time (Gen 29–30); and Moses resides with Reuel (Exodus 2:21). This element is inverted when Uriah does not go down to his own house as David instructed; he sleeps at the palace, in David's house *וישכב אוריה פתח בית המלך את כל-עבדי אדניו* for three nights (11:9–13). Instead of the prospective groom, David, staying in the home of his bride's family, a family member of the bride, her husband Uriah, resides in the home of the prospective groom, David's palace.

Betrothal type-scenes normally describe the suitor, having completed the betrothal, returning to the place where he resided before his journey and being received there by his kin. In this text it is not the suitor, David, but the family member who returns to where he resided before his journey when Uriah is ordered to return to the battlefield. Uriah is commissioned to return by the suitor, David, in order to carry a letter that gives instructions for his own death. At the end of his journey, Uriah is received by Joab when he delivers the letter (11:14–15). There is no mention of a kinship relationship between Joab and Uriah, but both were high-ranking officers in the military of David's kingdom (see Uriah's inclusion on a list of David's mighty men in 2 Sam 23:39 and 1 Chr 11:41) and may have known each other. P. Kyle McCarter has noted that 4QSam^a adds that Uriah the Hittite is "Joab's weapon-bearer." This reading was known to Josephus and, if accepted, would strengthen the inversion of this element.⁴⁰

After Uriah's death, David takes Bathsheba as a wife and she bears him a son (11:27). This narrative structural element is inverted by the text's obtrusive statement, in which the marriage and family of David and Bathsheba are cast in a negative light, "The thing which David had done was unpleasant in the eyes of the LORD (11:27)."

narratives he examined, although he suggests that this element and the drawing of water are linked, which is not the case here. See Martin, "Betrothal Journey Narratives," 508.

40. See McCarter, *II Samuel*, 279.

Presence of Key-words

The first key-word of the betrothal journey narrative to appear in 2 Sam 11 is the term מראה טבת, which describes the beauty of the woman. The key-word appears in the narrative of David and Bathsheba to describe the woman when first seen by David, טובת מראה מאד. Whereas in the other narratives this word is given after the identification and description of the woman, in 2 Sam 11 it occurs as soon as David sees her bathing. Bathsheba's beauty is her first characteristic described, as opposed to Rebekah and Rachel who were first identified as kinswomen and therefore an appropriate wife for the suitors. This characterization emphasizes that it is lust and not a more appropriate factor which attracts David to her.

The key-word שקה is suppressed completely in this narrative. שקה is a marker of the hospitality typically shown by the male, female, and the female's family; its absence in this narrative underscores the lack of hospitality shown by David and his inability to force hospitality as he has forced so many other things in this text. In response to the query regarding the identity of the woman, it is stated: "Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" (11:4). Whether this utterance was spoken by David or someone else, it is reflective of a key-word of the narrative structural schema identified by Alter in which the woman is identified as someone's daughter. Bathsheba is identified not only as the daughter of Eliam, but also as the wife of Uriah the Hittite. The convention of identifying a woman by her nearest male relative here further inverts the scene. This is not an unmarried woman suitable for courtship and betrothal as in other scenes. Bathsheba is married, and this will lead to great consequences for David and his kingdom.

Another key word of the scene appears after Bathsheba returns home: ותהר האשה (11:5). The verb הרה appears in Gen 24:21 and Gen 29:32,⁴¹ but the key-word appears earlier than normal in this narrative. The premature appearance of the key-word emphasizes that the conception was before marriage. It further illustrates the adulterous and inappropriate nature of David and Bathsheba's relationship. When David's initial attempt to manipulate Uriah into going home and having sex with his wife is ineffective, David increases his efforts and the two share a meal. Both eat and drink, and Uriah becomes drunk: ויאכל לפניו וישת וישכרה. The roots אכל "to eat" and שתה "to drink" are key-words of the betrothal type-scene, appearing in each of the other three narratives.⁴²

41. The key word is absent in Exodus 2. Instead Zipporah ילד "bears" a son for Moses, which decreases the focus upon Zipporah as noted in footnote 26.

42. אכל is found in Gen 24:33 and Ex 2:20. שתה is found in Gen 24:18 and Gen 29:22. In both cases, the words are in a section of the narrative where the suitor is eating with the

Their appearance here reinforces the idea that David is attempting to arrange a union between Uriah and Bathsheba, reminiscent of the betrothal normally arranged in the presence of eating and drinking, so that Bathsheba's pregnancy does not arouse suspicion.

This study has analyzed 2 Sam 11 in light of a refined narrative structural schema of the betrothal journey narrative found in the accounts of the betrothals of Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Rachel, and Moses and Zipporah. The major studies that have addressed the structure of these narratives were critically analyzed and a comprehensive narrative structural schema composed of plot elements and key-words was established. These elements and key-words were then identified in their inverted manner in 2 Sam 11.

The identification of the inverted betrothal journey narrative within 2 Sam 11 should be taken into consideration when discussing the textual history, political context and theological stance of the Book of Samuel, the question of the Succession Narrative, and 2 Sam 11 on its own. The presence of the inverted narrative structure brings the narrative in 2 Sam 11 alongside the narrative accounts of Isaac, Jacob, and Moses and contrasts David and his behavior with the persons and actions of these great Israelite figures. The contrast between David and the patriarchs suggested by the text itself casts David's actions and character in a negative light and emphasizes David's failure to adhere to hospitality and his attempts to control the situation in defiance of divine intent. Whereas Isaac, Jacob, and Moses acquire wives through obedience to the will of their God and allowing his will to manifest itself in their situations, David's gains his wife by "taking" Bathsheba in an act of rebellion against the will of Deity. By framing 2 Sam 11 within the same narrative structure as the other betrothal journey narratives, yet illustrating that David's actions are in complete inversion and opposition to what was done by the patriarchs and Moses, the text emphasizes David's sin repeatedly. As the text moves to each new element of the narrative structure, the audience is reminded again and again that David's actions are inappropriate.

The presence of the betrothal journey narrative structural schema within Gen 24, Gen 29, Exod 2, and 2 Sam 11 is suggestive of a textual relationship of some kind among these texts that would benefit from further examination as to their history and the question of their literary interdependence or dependence on a common source as the root of the shared structure. Investigations into this relationship will illustrate more clearly the cultural, scribal, and literary attitudes that affected the creation of the text of the Hebrew Bible.

woman's family in preparation for a marriage.