TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION

I declare that *A narrative critical analysis of Korah's rebellion in Numbers 16 and 17* is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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SUMMARY

This dissertation examines the complex story of Korah's rebellion found in Numbers 16 and 17 utilizing narrative critical theory. This study is first grounded in the context of historical questions surrounding Israel's emergence as a nation and the narrative's potential for historical veracity. Many narrative critics do not feel the theoretical necessity to establish the connection between an autonomous text and a historical context. This study does seek to collaborate with historical research, but only as permitted by the data. Though only biblical and tangential evidence supports the historicity of the wilderness sojourn, the narrative accounts should not be repudiated because of philosophical bias or the lack of corroborative extra biblical evidence. Especially important to a literary interpretation of this narrative is the work of source critics who during their own enquiries have identified the fractures and transitions within the story. In considering the text of Numbers 16 and 17, the hermeneutical approach employed in this study carefully endorses a balanced incorporation of the theoretical constructs of the author, text, and reader in the interpretive enquiry. From this hermeneutical approach recent literary theory is applied to the texts of Numbers 16 and 17 focusing particular attention on three narrative themes. First, the narrator's point of view is examined to determine the manner that information is relayed to the reader so as to demur the rebellion leaders. Though features of characterization are often meager in biblical narratives, there remains sufficient data in this rebellion story to support the aims of the Hebrew writers and does not undermine the reader's engagement with the story's participants. Finally, the three separate plotlines in this narrative sustain the dramatic effect upon the readership holding attention and judgment throughout and beyond the

story. In sum, this dissertation highlights the powerful contours of this ancient narrative

by appropriating the theoretical work of narrative critics. The strategies employed in the

writing and editing of this story uniquely condemn the rebels and at the same time serve

to elevate God's chosen leader—Moses.

KEY TERMS:

Numbers; Source criticism; Literary criticism; Hermeneutics; Archaeology;

Historiography; Narrative criticism; Narrator; Point of view; Focalization;

Characterization; Implied reader; Implied author; Reader response; Plot; Quinary scheme

ABBREVIATIONS

ABD	*Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Edited by D. N. Freedman. 6 vols. New York, 1992.
BA	*Biblical Archeologist*
BAR	*Biblical Archaeology Review*
BASOR	*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
BRev	*Bible Review*
BT	*The Bible Translator*
BSac	*Bibliotheca Sacra*
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CF	Character Focalizer
CRCL	*Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*
DS	*Dostoevsky Studies*
FOTL	Forms of Old Testament Literature
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
IDB	*The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible.* Edited by G. A. Buttrick. 4 vols. Nashville, 1962.
ISBE	*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. Edited by G. W. Bromily. 4 vols. Grand Rapids, 1978-1988.
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JLS	*Journal of Literary Semantics*
JQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review*
JSJ	*Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	Supplements to *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
MT	Massoretic Text
NEA	*Near Eastern Archaeology*
NF	Narrator Focalizer
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
RevExp	*Review and Expositor*
Semeia	*Semeia*
Them	*Themelios*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	Supplements to *Vetus Testamentum*
WTJ	*Westminster Theological Journal*

Old Testament Books

Gn	Genesis	Ec	Ecclesiastes
Ex	Exodus	Can	Canticles
Lv	Leviticus	Is	Isaiah
Nm	Numbers	Jr	Jeremiah
Dt	Deuteronomy	Lm	Lamentations
Jos	Joshua	Ezk	Ezekiel
Jdg	Judges	Dn	Daniel
Ruth	Ruth	Hs	Hosea
1 Sm	1 Samuel	Jl	Joel
2 Sm	2 Samuel	Am	Amos
1 Ki	1 Kings	Ob	Obadiah
2 Ki	2 Kings	Jnh	Jonah
1 Chr	1 Chronicles	Mi	Micah
2 Chr	2 Chronicles	Nah	Nahum
Ezr	Ezra	Hab	Habakkuk
Neh	Nehemiah	Zph	Zephaniah
Es	Esther	Hg	Haggai
Job	Job	Zch	Zechariah
Ps	Psalms	Ml	Malachi
Pr	Proverbs		

A NARRATIVE CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF KORAH'S REBELLION

1   Introduction

Historically the book of Numbers has not received the same attention as its counterparts

in the rest of the Pentateuch. Due to its ambiguous outline, its lack of a definitive

storyline, its monotonous lists, and its unwarranted length; it has failed to attract the

gratuitous attention of both the popular church, and the academy. At the same time,

several unresolved points of contention surround the book of Numbers including: its

compositional history, its historical value, and its structure. This dissertation will explore

these issues tangentially but will most directly undertake a narrative critical analysis of

Korah's rebellion (Nm 16 and 17), a dramatic sequence in the central section of

Numbers, focusing on the stylistic and literary features of this complex and intensely

charged story.

       Korah's rebellion and its denouement (Nm 16 and 17) has been found by scholars

to be 'unusually perplexing' (Sturdy 1976:115), and 'riddled with difficulties' (Milgrom

1989:414). These various difficulties have lead many scholars, particularly source critics,

to view this narrative as a composite. Sturdy concludes, regarding the shape of Numbers

16; 'The final editor has drawn together the different threads in such a way as to produce

a readable continuous story; but it has awkward transitions which reveal that it is a

compilation' (Sturdy 1976:115). In more recent years, some scholars who are less

inclined to follow source critical assumptions, interpret Numbers 16 as a unified whole.

Gordon Wenham (1981:135) treats this chapter as a unity, remarking on the disjointed

flow of the story: 'in a technique typical of biblical narrative the action is cut up into a

number of scenes focusing first on one party and then on the other.' Though source

critical issues will be engaged at points, this narrative analysis will view this text in a synchronic manner that examines the final product of the text and interprets the story as a dramatic whole. A narrative critical analysis of this rebellion story offers a rich and lively interpretation, grappling with the complexity of the varying antagonists.

Over the centuries scholars have interpreted the book of Numbers according to the same hermeneutical trends as that of the Pentateuch. In order to place this study in the flow of scholarly research it is necessary to briefly trace these trends of interpretation over the past two millennia.

1.1 A history of pentateuchal interpretation

1.1.1 Pre-modern Old Testament interpretation

Rabbinic Judaism tended to interpret Scripture literally and to rely heavily on the interpretations of previous rabbis and traditional teachings that were passed down from generation to generation. The Mishnah, Jewish oral law, written around 200 A.D., records individual essays on various topics mostly *halakah* in nature, a deduction of principles for conduct drawn from Old Testament texts. The Talmud records the interpretations of the Mishnah by rabbis who generally followed the traditional teachings of those before them. Most of its content is *haggadah,* that is, commentary on the Mishnah featuring illustrative and rhetorical material, meant to edify their readers. Fundamental to the practice of rabbinic Judaism is the use of *midrash*, an interpretive method that searches out the deeper meanings of passages, often labeled allegorical. The rabbis believed that truth was found both, in the words of Scripture, and in the sense of what lies behind them. These deeper meanings behind the text were obtained by following traditions and principles, but were directed by the pastoral search for

contemporary applications of Old Testament Scripture (Klein, Blomberg & Hubbard 1993:23-28).

Not surprisingly, the hermeneutical practices of the early church largely followed the Jewish example of allegory but with an emphasis on expounding Old Testament prophecies as fulfilled in the life and work of Christ. With the development of the Alexandrian and Antiochene schools of thought, came a divide in hermeneutical practices. The Alexandrian school, exemplified by Clement and Origen, tended to be heavily allegorical while the Antiochene group pursued a more literal exegesis of Scripture. The later church fathers, Jerome, Tertulian, and Augustine, acknowledged the difference between the literal and the allegorical interpretations of the past and accepted them both to varying degrees. John Cassian expanded these categories to: historical (literal), allegorical (doctrinal), tropological (moral instruction) and anagogical (eschatological), noting the value in each (Zuck 1991:33-40).

Through the Middle Ages Cassian's four-fold sense of Scripture continued in popularity and prominence right into the Reformation, with Luther being the last exegete of status to subscribe this method. Nonetheless, near the end of this era, the allegorical approach to Scripture declined in some quarters due to the emergence of scholasticism and Thomism (Lubac 1998:12-14). The scholastics applied the use of Aristotelian logic and syllogisms to theology which naturally emphasized the literal nature of texts. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) approached theology with a highly rational and systematic bent which he espoused in his prestigious work *Summa Theologica* that likewise devalued allegory (Klein et al 1993:39).

Martin Luther cautiously utilized the four-fold sense of Scripture and even expanded it to eight providing two new categories: historical and prophetic, for each of the four senses. Yet, Luther felt the interpretation of Scripture should be extrapolated principally from the literal sense of the text. Zwingli tended to follow the hermeneutics of Erasmus who sought to uncover the deeper sense of Scripture that lay behind the literal or superficial sense. This naturally lead to Calvin's work, which presented a literal sense of the text and full exposition of its meaning as directed and described in *The Institutes* (McGrath 1993:147-153).

John Calvin was committed to a high view of Scripture and Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, even asserting that God dictated materials to Moses directly (Calvin 1950:xiv). In his commentary, Calvin treats the last four books of the Pentateuch as a Harmony and attempts to reorder the materials to make a fluid whole. In general, the order runs from Exodus to Numbers interspersed with parts of Deuteronomy, in various lengths. He keeps Numbers 16 and 17 as a unity and does not consider them a composite (Calvin 1950:99). Naturally, interpreting the biblical text as a unity was widely presumed until the rise of modernity.

During this era, the historical-grammatical approach to Scripture emerged as the basis and goal of biblical study and refers to the normal sense of words and syntax (grammatical) and the meaning of the author in the time of writing (historical). This approach became more of a goal of interpretation rather than a system. Notably based on authorial intention, it did allow a standard by which to evaluate interpretations, and became foundational to those inclined to 'literal' readings of Scripture (Osborne 2006:25-79).

1.1.2 The modern era

After the reformation, the Copernican and Cartesian revolutions sharply reconfigured humanity's self-understanding and to varying degrees transformed every academic field. The astronomer, Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543) first postulated that our solar system was heliocentric (the planets orbiting the sun) as opposed to geocentric (the planets orbiting the earth), which suggested that humanity was spatially not at the center of the cosmos, but was only part of a much larger system. This shift in location, the removal from the center, implicitly suggested a demotion in station for humankind that caused an entire reexamination of our role in the cosmos (Allen and Springsted 2007:121). With the ensuing expansion of scientific discovery and prominence, biblical revelation was no longer widely accepted as the supreme arbiter of truth for the masses. History, as well, adopted the critical stance of scientific methodology. In short order, the philosopher Rene Descartes (1596-1650) advanced the view that humans are thinking, reasoning beings that must critically search for truth, rather than naively accept tradition. In the literary world, these major movements lead to the more scientific historical-critical approaches to reading and analyzing literature and the Bible (Spangenberg 2002:18-33). Consequently, the modern period has observed the urgent application of various 'scientific' or critical approaches to biblical studies.

1.1.2.1 Source criticism

In the late 1800's, a tide of German theological research washed over Old Testament scholarship. For over 100 years the composition and origins of the Pentateuch would

become the focal point of Old Testament research that would affect the interpretation of the Pentateuch at every point.

Though proposed by others in a germinate form, source criticism was firmly inaugurated and systematized by Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918) and several others who developed and refined his work in due course, including K. H. Graf, and B. Duhm (Schmidt 1995:47). It was the search for the origins of the Pentateuch that deeply affected Wellhausen's work. As the certainty of ancient Israel's history was sketchy at best, Wellhausen (1957) looked within the text itself to explain its origins. Principally, he found that the alternation between the names of God suggested that more than one author was involved in the production of the Pentateuch (Clements 1976:8-10). The three principal assumptions that have driven the Documentary Theory include: 'differences in style as an indication of the composite nature of the literature, the variation in the use of the names for God, and the phenomenon of duplicate narratives' (Nicholson 1998:228).

The past century has witnessed the evolution, and more recently the devolution, in the popularity of source critical methods. While modified versions of the early original Documentary Hypothesis are still in use by some scholars, inconclusive results and being in 'a constant state of flux' has lead to discontent among many others (Baker 2003:804). Consequently, the Documentary Hypothesis, its methods and presuppositions, are no longer on the throne of Old Testament studies (Alexander 2002:79). Currently no particular compositional approach or 'model' dominates the field. Nonetheless Nicholson (1998:27) represents a common view that endorses the past century of scholarly investigation of the Documentary Theory, and concludes: 'In short, what their researches showed above all was the complexity of the process that lead to the final form

of the Pentateuch, and that many hands at varying times over a protracted period contributed to its composition.' This study shares Nicholson's view, that while a concrete system for assigning and ordering sources is not established at this time, the general hypothesis that, over the course of centuries, authors (sources) and redactors were collecting, producing, and editing the Old Testament is assumed.

1.1.2.2 Form criticism

The foundational principle of form criticism is that most of the Old Testament 'had a long and often complicated oral prehistory' (Tucker 1971:6). Primarily credited to the exemplary work of Hermann Gunkel (1987), form criticism built upon the work of Wellhausen. Gunkel took a step beyond the investigation of the written prehistory of the text searching for the oral traditions, collections of stories and laws that existed prior to and independent of the written works known as G*attungsgeschichtliche.* Gunkel initially worked with the Genesis narratives examining the cycles of stories in the patriarchal narratives and then turned his attention to the Psalms, and later the law material, particularly the Decalogue. Certainly, some of his assumptions challenged the dating methods of the documentary hypothesis assessing the origins of the texts to be earlier than that of source critical conclusions. Gunkel's work advanced the study of genres and forms in the Old Testament, and contributed secondarily to a much deeper cognition of Israel's religious life and cult. While form criticism gained respectability in Pentateuchal studies, it did not eclipse source criticism, but lead to further developments in the work of Von Rad and Noth (Clements 1976:15-16). Three weaknesses were identified in Gunkel's form critical theory however. First, some have noted the inherent difficulty in

assessing if a portion of Scripture came from an oral source or an early written composition. And likewise, the dating of these possible early folkloric traditions is highly problematic. Second, and also pertaining to tradition critics, there is a strong use of etiology as way of identifying earlier sources. Some feel that Gunkel and Noth overestimate this etiological drive in ancient peoples and call into question their conclusions. And finally, there are those who still question if there was any orality at all, behind the written documents (Van Seters 1999:47-48). Nonetheless, form critics have advanced Old Testament studies by exposing the interpretive significance of the general and particular social/literary settings (*Sitz im Leben*) of biblical texts (Tucker 1971:9).

1.1.2.3 Redaction criticism

While most prominent in gospels research, redaction criticism in the Old Testament considers 'how literary materials are organized, interpreted, and modified by an author or editor' (Habel 1971:84). Contemporaneous to the developments of source and form criticism, redaction criticism considers how the redactors treated the material that they inherited, and were mostly interested in the very last stages of the editing process that brought the Old Testament to its final form and the theological interests that guided the redactor(s). In Old Testament research, redaction criticism is not viewed as a distinct field, but is a subject that falls within the scope of form and tradition critics and is observed within the works of Von Rad (1962) and Noth (1958) (Barton 1996:47).

1.1.2.4 Traditio-historical criticism

Gerhard von Rad (1901-1971) and Martin Noth (1902-1968) built on Gunkel's ideas and studied the historical settings and cultic situations at the time of the biblical text's composition. They sought to uncover the historical circumstances and social dynamics in the time between the oral stage and the written stage of the text. Von Rad noted short historical credos (especially Deuteronomy 26:5b-9) that he felt to be summary statements, confessions or liturgical affirmations that were eventually supplemented with the larger text by the biblical writers (Von Rad 1962:121-128). This brought into question the historical value of the writings beyond the tradition. Von Rad viewed the biblical writers more as collectors, being committed to the ancient traditions, who continued to add layers over time (Nicholson 1998:66-67). Von Rad's work rested on assumptions regarding the dating of these short historical statements, making his results provisional. He did give credit to the documentary hypothesis but questioned some of its dating formulas (Clements 1976:23).

While Martin Noth built on the work of Von Rad, Noth felt the origin of the Tetrateuch went back to the time of the judges. Therefore, he examined the worship practices of the twelve tribes, which he called an amphictyonic tribal league, suggesting that oral sources G (*Grundlage*) stood behind the written tradition. Noth proposed that G originated as local traditions, and over time, as these traditions were shared with other tribes at the central sanctuary, they culminated into a collection shared by 'all Israel'. Therefore, G became the common materials used by J and E. The major theme of G was the exodus narrative followed by: promise to the patriarchs, their residency in Canaan, the fulfillment of the promises, and guidance in the wilderness. These themes were

elaborated upon and enriched over time as G was under development (Nicholson 1998:79-83).   Consequent to this earlier dating, Noth had greater confidence in the content of Israel's earliest history. Noth felt that the Tetrateuch was a collection of J, E, and P and that these were not part of Deuteronomy or Joshua. Noth's commentary on the book of Joshua discounted the documentary hypothesis in the formation of the sixth book of the Hexateuch, contrary to the consensus at the time. Regarding the composition of Numbers, Noth accepts some source critical assumptions but contents: 'we would think not so much of "continuous sources" as of an unsystematic collection of innumerable pieces of tradition of a vary varied content, age and character ("Fragment Hypothesis")' (Noth 1968:4). While Gunkel, Von Rad, and Noth plied their research to traditio-historical criticism, they continued to subscribe to the general principles of source criticism (Whybray 1995:19). Rendtorff and Van Seters pursued traditio-historical criticism but contended against many source critical principles, especially Rendtorff.

Rolf Rendtorff ardently opposed Von Rad and Noth in their concession to source critical method, and he advocated a return to Gunkel's approach. Rendtorff was convinced that source criticism and form criticism had opposing starting points. While source criticism began with the final form of the text and moved backwards, form criticism should begin with the short credos and trace their development and growth forward in time (Nicholson 1998:101-102). Rendtorff (1986:1-5) advanced a more systematic approach to form criticism that did not rely so heavily on the Documentary Theory but examined the import of the major historical periods represented in the content. 'Rendtorff's method was to begin by considering the smallest elements of tradition and, abandoning the notion of continuous sources, to endeavor to show how

these had been built up through stages first into intermediate complexes and finally into larger blocks of material each with its own theme. These larger blocks (e.g., the Exodus story) had remained entirely independent of one another until they were combined at a late stage to form a comprehensive "history"' (Whybray 1995:22). His compositional model involves both fragmentary and supplementary theory, an editorial joining together of originally smaller literary units that later went through a process of editing in multiple stages (Nicholson 1998:113).

Van Seters follows some source critical premises but takes a supplementary view of the composition of the Tetrateuch and reorders the major works of the Old Testament. His research lead him to accept five stages or stratum in the Tetrateuch beginning with two levels of pre-J, to J proper, to a P addition, and then a later post-P addition (Nicholson 1998:132-149). Van Seters dates J proper to the late exilic period comparing the Yahwist with the Greek historian Herodotus. With this dating scheme, the Tetrateuch comes after D and DtrH: 'the J corpus as a whole must be understood as a prologue and supplement to Deuteronomy and to the larger Dtr history' (Van Seters 1999:61). Van Seters (1999:78) summarizes his model's relationship to the Documentary Hypothesis as follows: 'I do not accept the existence of an extensive source E. My basic differences from the documentarians are twofold. First, I regard D as the earliest source, which makes the relative order of the sources D, J, P. Secondly, I do not view the later sources J and P as independent documents but as direct additions to the earlier corpus. Since there are no separate sources after the first one, there is no need for redactors.'

Erhard Blum, a student of Rendtorff, felt that the two major blocks of the Tetrateuch were inherited by K^D (*D Komposition,* and later K^P, P *Komposition*), namely:

Genesis 12-50 from exilic times, and 'the life of Moses' from pre-exilic times. While he believes the final form of the Tetrateuch is dated to post exilic times, its formation can be traced back much earlier (Nicholson 1998:174).

Whybray has followed Van Seters but further erodes documentary theory by suggesting the negation of the priestly author, 'and that the Pentateuch may be regarded as to all intents and purposes the work of a single author' (Whybray 1995:26). Whybray criticizes the document theory because of the pervading tendency to late dating which is based, on the argument from silence that earlier evidence is not known, so the writing must then be late (Blenkinsopp 1992:26). Whybray does not entirely do away with sources but generally reduces them to two, J and D, with D having its own development by supplementation (Van Seters 1999:79).   However, Whybray has promoted a synchronic approach to the Pentateuch so as to avoid the speculative uncertainties inherent in diachronic studies (Whybray 1995:135).

This brief sampling of the major figures in Old Testament scholarship represents the historical critical focus of the discipline for the past two centuries. As clearly demonstrated, there remains considerable disagreement amongst source critics surrounding the origins of the Hebrew Bible. While historical critical research remains a constitutional feature of Old Testament studies, in the past half century an emerging interest in newer literary approaches have had a profound influence upon the discipline.

1.2   New literary criticism

Though source, form, redaction, and tradition-historical criticism are also 'literary' in nature, a new thrust in literary criticism has championed a renewed enthusiasm for

studying the bible as classic literature. The 'literary turn' in recent decades within

biblical studies shifted the interpretive interest toward the literariness of Scripture and the

resulting benefits of utilizing the tools and theory of literature with a fresh interest in its

content, as opposed to its origins. Within literary criticism, narrative criticism is only one

of many related approaches being applied to biblical texts, approaches that include:

rhetorical criticism, deconstruction, materialist criticism, feminist criticism, reader-

response criticism, and intertextual approaches (Satterthwaite 1997:125). Several of

these interpretive practices overlap and have affected narrative criticism and thus will be

addressed at relevant junctures within this study.

In the twentieth century, three major movements in literature and philosophy have

deeply influenced literary criticism, and indirectly biblical studies: Structuralism,

Poststructuralism and New Criticism. Structuralism makes use of a wide variety of

disciplines related to literature: anthropology, sociology, linguistics, and history, to

explore the deeper levels of underlying relationships and undercurrents that are below the

surface structures in literary works. Though emerging from Russian Formalism, the

pioneering work of Ferdinand de Saussure in structural linguistics established a basis for

literary structuralism for decades to follow. His distinction between *parole* (speech or

words) and *langue* (grammar and language system) provided the fundamental dialectic

for understanding utterances or texts. 'The nature of *langue* lies beyond, and determines,

the nature of each manifestation of *parole*, yet it has no concrete existence of its own,

except in the piecemeal manifestations that speech affords' (Hawkes 2003:9). In a broad

sense, such a foundation manifested itself within literary studies as an examination of

structures, forms, and relationships (*langue*) within literary works (*parole*). Abrams

(2005:310) defines the aim of traditional structuralism as 'to make explicit, in a quasi-scientific way, the tacit *grammar* (the system of rules and codes) that governs the forms and meanings of all literary productions.' However, more radical forms of structuralism advocated three assumptions that would undergird their approach: (1) texts exist autonomously within the literary world and are not connected to reality, (2) the author is not assigned any expressive force, and (3) the impersonal reader becomes the operative agent in interpretation (Abrams 2005:310-311). Roland Barthes is a transitional figure who initially adhered to structuralism but more fully inaugurated and promoted poststructuralism during the course of his career. Hawkes (2003:143-144) summarizes what he believes are the four enduring precepts that emerged from structuralism, and to some degree poststructuralism: (1) readers are never 'innocent', neutral, or objective, (2) texts are not 'objective' or 'transparent' but possess structural features that are derived from the necessary rules of language, (3) all criticism is in some way biased by political or ideological stances, and (4) texts require readers to engage and produce meaning. These precepts will materialize and be critiqued at points within this study, as they superimpose the well-established communicative model (the interaction between author-text-reader) espoused by Roman Jakobson. Poststructuralism 'destablized' the prominence of the author in interpretation and has advanced the acceptance of reader-response ideology that to varying degrees locates textual meaning in the engagement between the reader and the text.

While structuralism was expanding, New Criticism surfaced within literary circles, though sharing some assumptions with structuralism, it nuanced the movement in some regards. Likewise assuming the text to be independent and autonomous, new

critics more dogmatically viewed the literary work entirely apart from its historical setting or its connection to reality. Furthermore, new critics undertook 'close readings' that highlight: complex interrelationships and ambiguity, figurative elements, symbols, metaphors, and irony as distinctive to their readings (Abrams 2005:189). Structuralism, Poststructuralism, and New Criticism have left an enduring mark on the literary landscape and in distinctive ways have stimulated and shaped the work of narrative critics.

Narrative criticism, as defined by Marguerat and Bourquin, is 'a reading of a pragmatic type which studies the effects of the meanings brought out by the arrangement of the narrative: it presupposes that this arrangement implements a narrative strategy directed at the reader' (Marguerat and Bourquin 1999:8). The analysis of plots, settings, themes, characters, style, discourse, symbolism, narration, point of view, rhetorical strategies, *et al*, is the task of narrative critics who study the in like fashion as literary critics would analyze Homer or Shakespeare. The foundational assumption of narrative criticism displayed here:

> is that writers of the OT narrative exploit what were in effect the requirements of their chosen literary form resourcefully and in many ways: in order to provide interpretations and evaluations of the events narrated, to characterize the human participants in these events, to create ambiguity and suspense, and to influence the reader's response to what is described.

> (Satterthwaite 1997:125).

Though varying stances are subscribed by narrative critics surrounding the locus of meaning in the communication model, this study accepts that meaning is generated in the communication exchange within the matrix of the author, text, and reader; but meaning is organically resident in the text, and consequently interpretive activity focuses

on an analysis of the features of the story (text) and the effects, conceptual, emotive, and aesthetic, that these may have upon the reader.

A (re)birth of the literary approach to the Old Testament began with the landmark book of Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, published in 1981, which realigned the interpretation of Scripture to seriously consider the literary features of the text appropriating the modern discipline of literary criticism (VanGemeren 1997:101). Rather than concentrating on the composition of the text, particularly with Old Testament narratives, Alter accepted the final form of the text and sought to emphasize a careful reading, paying attention to the features of the narrative, the way a story teller who would dramatize a story while trying to communicate theology and morality in a way that appeals to readers. Unlike the historical-critical method, in literary criticism 'the interpretive key no longer lies in background information, but within the text itself' (Powell 1990:5).

In some respect, narrative criticism can modestly bridge the work of historical critics and reader-response critics, often considered diverse aspects of biblical studies. Narrative critics draw upon the resources of the disciplines that 'excavate' behind the text (documentarians, form critics, historical critics, etc.), while doing their own work in the textual world. At the same time, narrative critics have an appreciation for the aesthetics of the text that necessarily evokes the role of the reader, drifting into the territories of reader-response (and ideological interpretation). This type of cross-disciplinary appreciation can promote dialogue, co-operation, and synthesis in the field of biblical studies. For this and other reasons, some see this method as the best way forward for biblical scholarship. 'In general, studies of the Bible as literature, like narrative criticism

per se, hold out the best hope for modern interpreters of Scripture to glean insight from the tools of literary criticism' (Klein et al 1993:438).

The advantage of a narrative critical exegesis is the holistic approach to reading narratives, examining the narrative and structural features of a text and also exploring the broader connections between other texts in the biblical canon. A point of frustration for many readers of Old Testament historical critical works is the inordinate attention to minutia, an atomization that fails to draw together the larger strands and themes of the narrative. This atomization can become unbalanced, misplacing the emphasis in a given text, and at times, even omitting meaningful conclusions. Narrative critical exegesis draws from the detailed work of exegetes but then strives to incorporate the data into a holistic understanding of the narrative and consider the unique features of narrative works.

The synchronic approach to the text does not deny that there may be literary or oral sources used in the composition of the biblical text; however it questions our ability to construct a theory that accurately unravels those sources. It is the writer's judgment that with the evidence available to scholarship: linguistic, archaeological, or historical, critics are not in a position to make assured conclusions about the boundaries of the sources, their ordering, or the date of composition. Narrative criticism does not have to be ahistorical, as perhaps promoted by some new critics, but accepts a cultural and historical connection to the past, either in it description of real past events or in the setting of its writing, or both, that may supply background material to be impelled into the interpretive process. In fact, narrative criticism can assist in providing historical data from the text where historical interpretation or hypothesis, fall short (Powell 1990:86).

We do, however, have a Hebrew text that has been carefully transmitted, which provides the final work of redactor(s), and can be studied with a certain confidence as to its final form. This is not a naïve view of the compositional process, but it acknowledges that the task of interpreting a dissected and disjointed text is different from interpreting an established text treated as a unity. So rather than try to interpret the shaping process of the text, narrative critics can, with greater certitude, examine the intentions, methods, and theology of the author(s) or final redactor. While this study is focused on narrative critical analysis, it is acknowledged that Old Testament research is truly an amalgam of critical approaches and as a result, I will unashamedly, but critically, make use of material from varying criticisms according to their relevance.

1.3   A history of the research specific to Numbers 16 and 17

Later in this study, a major section appears that details the separate issues of historicity, source and form criticism, structure and setting. This section will provide a foundation to demonstrate the direction of the research into narrative criticism.

Modern scholarship has principally viewed Numbers 16 and 17 as a composite work, based on the evidence of multiple scene changes and repetition within the stories (Gray 1903:186-187; Olsen 1996:101-102). These seeming abnormalities were considered to be major clues for source critics that changes of sources were being signaled within the composition of the text. The common conception of source critics, though with some detractors and variants, identifies the earliest source as a combined JE in 16:1b, 2a, 12-15, 25, 26b, 27b-32a, 33-34, describing the Reubenite revolt against Moses which resulted in their death by divine judgment, being swallowed by a divinely

created fissure in the ground. The second layer being added by the P source in 16:1a, 2b, 3-7, 18-24, 26a, 27a, 35, 41-17:13 which traces Korah's Levite rebellion with his 250 followers who were ultimately incinerated by a divine fire. There is possibly one other addition presumed to be P_s in 16:1a, 7b-11, 16-17, 32b, 36-40 that describes a Levite insurrection against Aaron desiring that the priesthood be extended to all the Levites (cf. Milgrom 1989:415; Levine 1993:405).

The commentaries by Gray and Levine represent the highest level of source critical work on the book of Numbers. Gray (1903:xxx-xxxi) upholds the standard compositional approach, denying Mosaic authorship, and like Genesis and Exodus, believing Numbers was principally derived from two works, '(1) a compilation (JE) which was made at the end of the 7th century B.C., and consisted for the most part of extracts from the Judean collection of stories (J) of the 9th century B.C., and a similar collection (E) made in the Northern kingdom in the 8th century B.C., and (2) of a priestly history of sacred institutions (P^g), which was written about 500 B.C.' Furthermore, he suggests that over time (JEP^g) or (P^g) were enlarged by (P^x) and (P^s). Gray finds that it is normally not difficult to separate JE from P, but it is rarely possible to separate J from E with any confidence.

In considering the composition of Numbers 16, Gray is consistent with his source critical convictions that this narrative is a composite but concedes: 'It would in the abstract be conceivable that people, discontented with the leadership of Moses, led by Dathan and Abiram, united in a common revolt with others under Korah, who were aggrieved by the claims to a superior holiness on the part of the Levites, to whom Moses and Aaron belonged' (Gray 1903:186-187). However, Gray explains that he judges this

to be a composite because the two parties, Korah, and Dathan and Abiram, act separately

and are judged separately with different punishments, even though they were listed

together in the opening of the chapter. He further notes separate treatment in the

Pentateuch where only Korah is mentioned as a rebel in Numbers 27:3 and in

Deuteronomy 11:6 where only Dathan and Abiram are mentioned. Gray feels that

Deuteronomy 11:6 predates the writing of Numbers 16 and that the Numbers writer

borrowed some phraseology for his production. Though without much evidence, Gray

suggests that the two rebellion stories had not been unified at the time of writing of

Numbers 27:3. There are also distinctions between linguistic tendencies in the two

accounts (JE and P) that, in Gray's view, corroborate the conclusion that Numbers 16 is a

composite. Therefore, in Gray's commentary, he boldly divides the biblical text of

Numbers 16 into two strands and comments on them separately.

Levine also approaches Numbers as a completely composite book ascribing J and

E as one unit and P as the subsequent stage in the development of the book.

> At points, one can identify either J or E as the ultimate documentary source
> of a passage in Numbers, but we should normally be content to engage the
> composite source, JE, and to evaluate the materials it utilized. As regards
> the book of Numbers, the primary challenge is to explain how priestly
> writers recast the JE traditions and expanded upon them, thereby
> reconstructing the record of the wilderness period so as to focus on their
> central concerns.

(Levine 1993:49)

As a consequence, Levine suggests that ultimately JE plays a less dominate role in

Numbers and that 'the work of the priestly school in Numbers had the effect of altering

the character of the entire book' (Levine 1993:52). Levine further contends that Numbers

should be studied diachronically because of its 'complex composition' and because the

varied perceptions of the different layers of composition would be lost, and not apprehended by synchronic analysis.

Related to Numbers 16 and 17, Levine observes the strong influence of the priestly writers over the historicity of the JE source: 'the priestly school transformed whatever had been the issue at stake in the rebellion into an internecine rivalry among the clans of the tribe of Levi' (Levine 1993:67). As such, the priestly writers decisively removed any claim that the Kohathites may have espoused for Israel's priesthood. Levine questions the historical reliability of this account by asserting that the priestly writers were motivated by political forces several centuries after the time of the events (cf. Olson 1996:102).

Milgrom judiciously incorporates source critical assumptions, form criticism and tradition criticism into his interpretation process, being adroit in using the best method in light of the nature of the exegetical task. He strongly judges Numbers 16 to be a composite, and notes the interlacing of three rebellion stories into one: Dathan and Abiram against Moses, Korah and the chieftains against Aaron, and Korah and the Levites against Aaron. He suggests there may even be a fourth rebellion: Korah and the community against Moses and Aaron (Milgrom 1989:415). It is noteworthy here that source critical methods have a tendency towards dissection of stories, rather than a contingent presumption of wholeness or interconnectedness.

Noth views Numbers 16 and 17 as a literary unit and likewise as a composite. 'It is abundantly clear from the present text that in this complex of traditions several different traditions have come together but rather that several, already fixed, literary "sources" have been worked together by a redactor' (Noth 1968:121-122). He identifies

three specific strands of rebellion stories that have been brought together. However, when he comments on chapter 17, he makes no connection to the dramatic events of chapter 16 or, for that matter, any other intertextual connections to plague, censor, or staff stories (Noth 1968:130-131).

Wenham (1981:142), Whybray (1995:26) and other prominent Old Testament scholars have dissented from source critical conceptions and, in general, find that source criticism does not always account for the cohesion and unity of narratives, as well as the connections across the supposed sources. 'Despite some impressive early hypotheses, the findings of source analysis have proved mainly inconclusive' (Gunn and Fewell 1993:5). Wenham (1981:142) reviewed the evidence for a source critical reading of Numbers 16 and 17 and concluded: 'it seems simplest to regard Numbers 16-17 as a unit.' This study will examine Numbers 16 and 17 as a unit but not from the same perspective of Wenham. While the source critical arrangement for these chapters is not precise there are enough signals to conclude that these chapters are composite in nature (Gordon 1991:65-66). This application of narrative criticism will examine the final form of the text but not in a naïve manner. Some narrative critical questions cannot be answered precisely because of the composite nature of the text. Further, the weaving together of texts (stitching) sometimes produces 'gaps' that are not meant to enjoin the imagination of the reader, a common assumption in narrative criticism. Consequently, my view point is that narrative criticism can be utilized judiciously even where the text creates interpretive problems associated with the interlacing and editing of redactors. At the same time, authors or editors may have purposefully utilized gaps for interpretive benefit. Directly addressing the plot of Numbers 16, Marguerat and Bourquin (1999:54) proclaim the increased

forcefulness in its current interlaced form. 'Historical tradition classically divides these three stories into different traditions. When we read the story narratively as presented to us (cf. Ps. 106.16-18; Sirach 45:18), we see that the combination of plots increases the complexity and the virulence of the conflict.' This is the general assumption that will be followed in this analysis of Korah's rebellion but with an eye to the implications of source critical findings.

1.4   Specific research problems in Numbers 16 and 17

There exists a strong consensus that the rebellion story of Numbers 16 is a composite of two, three, or possibly four, rebellion stories being combined into one (Gray, Noth, Milgrom, as previously noted). Rather than interpreting this complex rebellion story as a composite, this narrative analysis will scrutinize the narrative produced by the final editor, but indeed consider the implications of source divisions relative to narrative critical questions. As a consequence, a careful survey of source critical positions related to Numbers 16 and 17 will have to be undertaken to provide a foundation for interaction.

There are a number of minor problems that arise when trying to interpret this story caused by several gaps of information and irregularities in the expected plotline. The first surrounds the inclusion of On in Numbers 16:1 and then his complete disappearance in the storyline. Is his inclusion a scribal error, or is his absence an oversight by the narrator? Second, there is the missing object in verse one, which requires the exegete to make an interpretive decision as to how to translate the verbal idea. The New International Version resolves the grammatical problem by translating: 'Korah...became insolent', while the New American Standard Bible uses 'Korah...took

action', and the Revised Standard Version, King James Version, New King James Version, and Authorised Standard Version translated 'Korah...took men.' Third, in Numbers 16:2, opposition is leveled against Moses, but in the following verse the revolt is against Moses and Aaron yet, Moses responds as if the revolt is only against Aaron in verses 4-7, creating confusion as to the exact nature and target of the complaint. This blurring of defendants, as well as the different groups acting as antagonists, has been part of the insistence of source critics for inferring multiple layers in the story. Fourth, Moses interjects the Levites into verse 7 as making a claim to the priesthood. Are they a whole new group in the rebellion or are they merely a significant composition of Korah's followers? Fifth, the spatial separation of Dathan and Abiram from Moses and apparently Korah's rebellion group when summoned by Moses in Numbers 16:12, questions their overall connection to Korah's rebellion. Their complaint diverges from that of Korah and his group, being leveled directly against Moses and his inability to lead the nation into the Promised Land. The motivation of Dathan and Abiram and the ensuing storyline seems disjunctive to the nature of the rebellion(s) in the rest of the chapter. Sixth, the death of Korah remains an enigma. Did he die in the fiery judgment, or was he swallowed in the earthquake, and why was the nature and certainty of Korah's death left veiled? This lacuna created a divide in the earliest versions and commentaries with death by fire signaled in the Samaritan Pentateuch and Josephus, and death by quake promoted in the Mishnah, with both possibilities encapsulated in the Talmud (Milgrom 1989:416). While this conundrum as well as the previous five are not entirely answerable, they are quite representative of those addressed by modern critics who tend to be primarily concerned with compositional questions.

A narrative critical examination of Numbers 16 and 17 will consider these questions but also raise many new questions. For example: considering the story in its final form, what would be the practical or aesthetic value of the redactor's combining the two (or more) rebellion stories and what would be the potential relationship between the rebelling factions? Why are there dramatic gaps (both spatial and temporal) between Numbers 16:4 and 5, 15 and 16, 34 and 35, and what is their intention in the story? Why is there an underlying concern for spatial movement in this story between the tabernacle, the tent of meeting, the camp, and 'up' verses 'down'? What is the perspective of the narrator? What are the distinctive qualities of personality observed in each of the characters? What are the theological and rhetorical intentions of the author, what is the God character's role in the story, and how is he portrayed by the narrator? How are readers meant to receive this narrative? And how do the featured characters impact the plot of the narrative? What are the aesthetic features of the overall story and how are they meant to affect interpretation?

There are some questions of a broader nature that will need to be considered. What are the rhetorical or pedagogical intention(s) of this narrative to Israel? How does the structure of the story relate to its overall message and plot? How does the wilderness setting lend to the reading of the narrative? What is the historical worth of the rebellion story? Hermeneutical questions surrounding the reader invariably have to be addressed when analyzing the aesthetics of plot and characterization. Finally, how does modern literary theory advance our ability to understand this ancient biblical rebellion story? Yet, on the other hand, how are Hebrew narratives distinctly different from modern novels and what features of these stories provides interpretive signals?

1.5   The text and translation of Numbers 16 and 17

Before embarking on a narrative critical study, one must be as confident as possible in establishing the best text from the available manuscripts. Yairah Amit (2001:25) also upholds the need for text critical analysis: 'the first stage in analyzing a biblical story must be to obtain the information provided by Bible criticism about the particular text.' Common sense dictates that this is the same for narrative critics as it is for other exegetical operations.

The common presumption that the best available text of the Old Testament is the Hebrew text produced by the Massorites is likewise maintained for this study. The well-documented and meticulous practice of the Massorites, along with their philosophy of preservation that was central to the Massoretic tradition, has engendered a wide confidence in the accuracy of these copyists. Though their work was largely completed between 1000 and 1200 A.D., it remains deeply respected as a bona fide and definitive representation of the unknown original texts. 'In fact, we do not have any Hebrew manuscript of the entire Old Testament written earlier than the tenth century' (Würthwein 1995:11). However, 'now it is increasingly realized that the Massoretic text, in some form or other, indeed had an authoritative position at least in the time of the Bar Cochba revolt of A.D. 132-5 when copies of the scriptures used by the soldiers were as "Massoretic" as any from a later time' (Roberts 1979:6).

While the Septuagint provides an early witness to the text of the Old Testament, it is now firmly accepted that the Septuagint translation suffers from all the difficulties involved in translating from one language to another including: the significant difference

in syntax between Hebrew and *Koine* Greek, the loss of Hebraisms and some idioms, the inexact correspondence between lexical fields, the scope of knowledge and the skill of the translators, and the cultural and theological influences of the translators. Though the Septuagint is useful as a general witness to the Hebrew Bible, 'it can be useful for textual criticism only after a careful appreciation of its nature, its various translation techniques, and its history. We must beware of attempting to reach the underlying Hebrew text through a simple and direct back-translation of the Greek text into Hebrew' (Würthwein 1995:70). Textual critics ascribe the Massoretic text as most reliable particularly where ambiguities arise: 'the MT in diagnostic readings more frequently shows signs of originality, and therefore its witness pitted against another in an otherwise ambiguous case is to be preferred' (Williams 2003:840). In their commentaries, Gray, Levine and Cole uphold the high textual quality of Massoretic Text (MT) version of Numbers in comparison to the extant witnesses and major manuscripts: the LXX, Samaritan Pentateuch, and the Dead Sea Scrolls, and all concur that the book is largely free of corruptions. Milgrom (1990:xi) confidently states: 'the text of Numbers is in an excellent state of preservation. The variations in Masoretic manuscripts are few and insignificant.'

Problematic for Numbers 16 and 17 is the variation in 'chapter and verse divisions' between different versions. Of course, chapter and verse divisions originated around the 13th century, and were utilized rather consistently in English translations. For the purpose of this study the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) will be employed because of its quality as a translation and sensitivity to modern language issues. Nonetheless, a major divergence subsists between the NRSV and the Massoretic Text.

NRSV (English)	MT (Hebrew)
Nm 16:1-35	Nm 16:1-35
Nm 16:36-50	Nm 17:1-15
Nm 17:1-13	Nm 17:16-28

As a consequence this study will follow the NRSV chapter and verse divisions but will include the MT divisions wherever the Hebrew text is quoted or alluded to.

1.6   The composition and redaction of Numbers

The standard compositional schema for the sources of the Pentateuch has been well established by source critics since Wellhausen (1957:12-13). Of acute importance is the major redaction which brought together the previously combined JE to P in the postexilic period (Schmidt 1995:49). The number of redactions and the process employed remains indeterminate but: 'The process unavoidably entailed certain alterations, transpositions, and omissions, as well as additions' (Schmidt 1995:48).

This presumption ascribes the redactors considerable power to shape and alter the contents of the Pentateuch, to address and subscribe the text to the circumstances of their times. Consequently, Numbers 16 and 17 have been presumed to address 'the intense struggle for control of temple prerogatives in the postexilic community. It is generally assumed that the Levites had full authority in preexilic Israel, but with Deuteronomy and Josiah's reform movement there ensued a tremendous power struggle which was eventually won by the Zadokite priests' (Hutton 1992:101). While this conclusion coheres with tradition-historical assumptions, it relies entirely on a late date for the final redaction of the Pentateuch and negatively presumes that the final redactors were

complicit in significantly manipulating inherited materials for their own purposes, or entirely forging fictional material and holding it out as historical.

Contrary to this view, Schniedewind (2004:82-83) argues for an earlier date (8th to 6th century) for the composition of the Pentateuch based on varied grounds: (1) the manuscripts represent Classical Hebrew (pre-exilic), rather than late Hebrew, (2) the Pentateuch preserves an oral register not present in the more scribal style of later Hebrew, and (3) the content of the Pentateuch, especially Numbers, presents a positive representation of the northern tribes, not likely to be the sentiment of Judean Israel. This is suggestive that the posited final priestly redactors in the postexilic period, having no interest in the twelve tribes of Israel, especially the northern ones that were the religious bane of the nation, still upheld and included plenty of material attesting to pre-exilic conditions. This point is substantial when considering how much deviance and alteration from inherited materials that the final priestly redactors were presumed to have employed in the postexilic period. While it is outside the scope of this study to conclude on the date of the final redaction of the Pentateuch, there seems to be a negative bias against the integrity of the final redactors that is unwarranted. Consequently, this study views the final redactors more favorably and presumes that they tended towards fairness to their inherited materials, rather than alleging that they made massive alterations to sacred texts. While shaping, ordering, and stitching are presumed, and perhaps some measure of subjective input, the degree of modification and corruption is not presumed to be extreme. How does this address the historical veracity of Numbers 16 and 17? According to Schniedewind's research, the rebellion story may have originated orally in

the wilderness sojourn, and then became part of the inherited written witness that was passed down to the final priestly redactors.

The rhetorical purpose of the final narrative may have to be viewed with less specificity than Hutton (1992:101) has promoted. Rivkin asserts a modest and generally more sustainable purpose for this narrative that: 'any challenge on the part of the Levites or the people at large to the priestly monopoly of Aaron and his sons would be put down as forcefully in the future as it had been put down in the past' (Rivkin 1988:575).

1.7   Methods of research and presuppositions

The ancient narrative of Numbers 16 and 17 will be read and examined in the original Hebrew language accounting for the lexical and syntactic features employed by the Hebrew author. Specific presuppositions related to Hebrew narrative will be utilized, such as: noting relationships between words, phrases, and clauses, and identifying expressions and figurative forms. Understanding words on their literal and figurative level, and their usage on a syntactical level, is essential for constructing firm propositions and interpretations. Much of this work will not be manifest within the pages of this study unless it has a bearing on the narrative analysis.

Second, because such a cultural and temporal divide exists between the ancient Near East and our modern Western world, it is necessary to scrutinize cultural variations as they are observed in a given text. This may be done within the biblical corpus itself, particularly when Israelite cultic material is in view. Material remains and documentary evidence, from both inside and outside of Israel provide potential clues to cultural features and may expose a rich background that may contribute to the interpretation of

particular texts. However, this is not to assume that we possess an exhaustive and thoroughgoing knowledge of the ancient milieu, therefore this study acknowledges limitations in our ability to perfectly recreate the past (Sternberg 1985:16).

There are other literary features of a text that need to be considered: symmetry, rhetoric and intertextuality. Symmetrical patterns, such a chiasm, were commonly used by Hebrew writers, not only for aesthetics but also to point out important theological concepts. Though Sternberg (1985:40-41) believes these to be primarily 'information or memorial' in nature, downplaying their literariness. Nonetheless, chiasm does suggest boundaries between units and reveals emphasis to varying degrees. These features will need to be weighed against other narrative concerns and determine how these features contribute to the overall meaning of the story. For example, chiastic structure plays a significant role in the understanding of Numbers as widely illustrated by Milgrom (1989). These chiastic structures are observed engulfing major units (entire chapters), and also in small units (only a few verses). Numbers 16 itself has an interesting ABCC'B'A' chiasm that needs to be carefully considered (Milgrom 1989:417). As Walsh explains 'different forms of symmetry tend toward different interpretive dynamics: reinforcement and intensification, comparison, contrast, reversal, and so forth' (Walsh 2001:8). While it is a literary devise especially useful for noting the boundaries of the text, it may emerge as an effective element for interpretative purposes.

The rhetorical element in narratives cannot be overlooked, particularly in the biblical canon, where the author hopes to do more than just inform his audience of history. 'Old Testament narrative books do have a didactic purpose, that is, they are trying to instill both theological truths and ethical ideas into their readers' (Wenham

2000:3). Old Testament writers seemingly desired to communicate with multiple

purposes and used various strategies to do so. This leads to further questions. What

persuasive tendencies are used in the narrative and how are they discernable? Was the

author trying to evoke a particular response from his audience? These interpretive

questions necessarily lead into other criticisms, such as: reader-response, speech-act

theory, and rhetorical criticism.

In accepting a synchronic study of the biblical text, this writer does not feel the

need to jettison or ignore the work of those doing diachronic study. In fact, the

importance of spanning the gap of history and culture is essential to establishing the

contexts of these narratives. The lexical studies of many historical critics are essential to

sound exegesis because of their careful attention to morphology and philology. While

different criteria and presuppositions will be applied in the interpretive process, the data

gleaned from historical critical practitioners will generate a strong foundation from which

to garner superior conclusions.

Each chapter of this work focused on analysis begins with a review of relevant

theory and its application by biblical narrative critics, and is followed by a narrative

analysis of Numbers 16 and 17. This study proceeds as follows. Chapter two considers

the potential historical import and veracity of Numbers 16 and 17 reviewing the modern

predisposition to historical investigation in relation to the field of historiography.

Chapter three examines the literary setting of the rebellion story—source critical

assumptions, the structure of Numbers both of which provide a foundation for narrative

investigation. Chapter four examines the powerful influence of the narrator and their

point of view within the text and its effects upon the reader. Chapter five, devoted to

characterization, is philosophically related to chapter six which analyzes the plot of the

narrative, as character analysis requires attention to plot features (Gunn & Fewell

1993:2). The conclusion highlights the central features and contributions of this study to

the field of Numbers interpretation.

2 THE HISTORICITY OF THE BOOK OF NUMBERS

Practitioners of narrative criticism, along with other newer literary criticisms, have been accused of divorcing their work from historical criticism on a theoretical and methodological level: the theoretical, because narrative critics tend to view the text as autonomous, standing apart from its prehistory—and methodological, because the text is studied synchronically (Powell 1990:96). The question of historicity in relationship to the book of Numbers has become more difficult to answer with confidence because of the trends in historical research. In recent decades there has been a flurry of publications in the field of archaeology that have challenged the traditional view of Israel's origins—and denying the occurrence of Israel's wilderness sojourn. At the same time, several historians have promoted and articulated a broader vision of historical theory and practice. These two movements, which tend to travel in opposing directions, have implications for the study of the book of Numbers. This chapter examines the current state of archaeological progress in the biblical lands, and the claims and hypotheses being offered by archaeologists. Despite prolonged efforts, there remains considerable divergence among archaeologists and historians on critical matters: Israel's presence in Egypt, the sojourn in the wilderness, and the nature and date of the conquest. An examination of historiographical theory will propose deficiencies in the views of some historians and archaeologists who entirely reject the historical value of the Old Testament based on modern bias or uncritical historiographical underpinnings. While certainly modern readers may wish to 'demythologize' the Old Testament, this does not mean *de facto* that the text must also be 'de-historicized'.

This chapter maintains the possibility that a group of 'pre-Israelites' departed Egypt in the spirit of liberation, moved through the wilderness, eventually settling in the land of Canaan. This possibility is held out only on the basis of circumstantial evidence in conjunction with the biblical text, recognizing the lack of corroboration from extra-biblical textual data. It is further espoused, that such historical information was likely preserved in oral tradition in the centuries between the time of the events until writing was inaugurated in Israel, perhaps as late as the monarchic period between the 8th to 6th centuries (Schniedewind 2004:85-85). Mark Smith concurs with Schniedewind that the Hebrew grammar of 'the Torah looks like a largely monarchic period production' (Smith 2004:9). Therefore, this proposal affords a plausible strand of history during the wilderness sojourn, in contradiction to the wide ranging assumption that priestly writers could not have written with some historical import centuries after the events they wrote about (Budd 1984:xxvii). My assertion is not that the historical veracity of the Pentateuch can be proved, but merely the maintenance of a basic storyline—the prospect of a liberation event from Egypt and a migration to Canaan.

Though admittedly circumstantial, Smith advances three features of the Exodus account that suggests 'some sort of departure from Egypt by some antecedents of the Israelites': (1) the Egyptian etymology for names of major figures (Moses, Aaron, and Phinehas), (2) the unlikelihood that a nation would falsely represent its ancestors as oppressed slaves, and (3) the older poetry of the Hebrew Bible (Exodus 15 and Numbers 23-24) advocate an exodus tradition (Smith 2004:19). At the same time, several historians have been questioning the modern standards applied to ancient history writers and new questions about the field of historicity are being explored. This chapter engages

the broad debate surrounding historicity and questions the assumptions of some historical minimalists, attempting to allow a wider scope of historical potentiality for the reconstruction of events recorded in the book of Numbers.

The sojourn of the Israelites in the wilderness recorded in the book of Numbers is enclosed between two of Israel's most significant purported historical events in biblical antiquity—the exodus from Egypt, and the conquest of Canaan. The central question of this chapter is: do the narrative sojourn accounts in Numbers document real historical events, or are the stories non-historical pre-Israelite mythology? How will we be able to answer this question? Will modern archaeology alone be able to supply an accurate answer? Are there other elements in the broader field of historiography that will provide an adequate model by which to judge the historical authenticity of Numbers? And, is the biblical text itself a suitable source for reliable and trustworthy data about Israel's history and the ancient world? And finally, tangential to these questions is the literary question: is it even necessary to have a historical basis for a credible literary analysis of the wilderness wanderings?

2.1   Archaeology and the wilderness sojourn

It should be noted at the outset that tracing Israel's sojourn in the wilderness archaeologically would be a difficult task due to the nature of Israel's time in the desert. They were in transit—not building, settling, or establishing properties. They were not producing or collecting goods. Nomadic groups, similar to the Israelites in transit, have been very difficult to detect archaeologically (Bimson 1989:10). Except for sundry remains, it is not expected that the Israelites left anything materially significant behind.

Obviously, the reality of Israel's presence in the desert is contingent on an exodus from Egypt, and an invasion or infiltration, of some sort, into Canaan, both of which are subject to immense scholarly disagreement.

Most recently, the study of archaeology has expanded to utilize all available methods of modern scientific enquiry that are useful in recovering and analyzing material remains. The objects and artifacts are quite diverse including ornaments, art works, tools, weapons, buildings, vessels, and are composed of various materials such as: stone, metal, clay, papyri and parchment. The work of archaeologists quite specifically reconstructs the patterns of daily life, economics and social stratification of ancient people (Wiseman 1979:309). In my view, the essential task and value in archaeology is the field's ability to collect an assemblage from the past and describe the patterns of life, providing a cultural and material setting. When it comes to historical verification, archaeology is rarely able to authenticate specific events or details within the biblical text. 'With regard to Biblical events, however, it cannot be overstressed that archaeological data are mute' (Wright 1971:73). For the purposes of asserting Israel's sojourn in the wilderness, it is not necessary to substantiate the nature or details of either the exodus or conquest, but merely that there is evidence of such a movement of Israelites from Egypt to Canaan.

More recently the proliferation of data available to archaeologists for interpretation with the application of newer scientific technologies to archaeology such as: radiocarbon dating, chronometric dating, neutron activation analysis, gas chromatography, electron microscopy, DNA analysis, and more, has added more complexity to the process of interpretation. New archaeology now includes more disciplines of enquiry to aid in analysis: geomorphology, geology, paleo-botany, paleo-

zoology, climatology, paleo-ecology, hydrology, physical and cultural anthropology, ethnography, and broadly, sociology (Dever 2001:59-60). While the addition of these ancillary technologies and sciences have added precision on some fronts, they have prompted several new dilemmas: the extended time needed for analysis and publication of all this burgeoning data, the complex matter of synthesizing all of this data, the philosophical questions of relevancy of these new disciplines, and looming behind all this scientific data is the interpretive burden upon the archaeologist, as the complexities of excavation and intricacies of stratification remain the same (Dever 1981:20-21). While 'new archaeology' holds out promise for innovative application of the sciences, it is not without its pitfalls as the corresponding weight of interpretative decision making remains upon the archaeologist.

The biblical archaeology movement from 1940-1970 was lead by W. F. Albright and his students J. Bright and G. E. Wright who collectively became known as the 'Baltimore School' (Bimson 1989:4). Their diligent excavating in Israel was a program to demonstrate the historical reliability of the biblical record, 'having the trowel in one hand, and the Bible in the other.' The scope of their work was limited to the biblical world of antiquity ranging from 3000 B.C. to the first century A.D. and they firmly upheld the biblical conquest model of Canaan in the 13th century B.C. However, their work and convictions supporting the conquest model came under attack as conflicting interpretations and as new data came to light—Kenyon's work at Jericho, Marquet-Krause at Ai, and Pritchard at Gibeon, all discrediting a Late Bronze Age destruction of these cities (Dever 2003:45-49).

Though often denigrated by revisionist archaeologists, Craigie (1986:81) warns that the data and findings of the biblical archaeology movement should not be dismissed, because they did not practice a different type or method of archaeology, though their apologetic aims and presuppositions need to be accounted for in their interpretations. Though primarily concerned with proving the Bible, the biblical archaeologists were well aware of the secondary importance of their work to Christianity, Judaism, and more broadly to Middle Eastern studies.

The present state of modern archaeology reflects the academic and social trends of our day, challenging traditional modes of knowledge. Consequently, modern archaeology includes 'revisionists' who impose various socio-political ideals into their interpretation of the data, including such scholars who have published on the topic of Israel's origins: T. L. Thompson and N. P. Lemche (founders of the 'Copenhagen School'), followed by P. R. Davies, and K. W. Whitelam. These revisionists are driven by ideological tendencies and are inclined to reject traditional ideas and objective facts (Dever 2001:52). They have become the 'straw men' of many recent works examining archaeology and historiography. Particularly questionable of Thompson, and other minimalists, is his interpretive process which values artifactual evidence over textual sources, particularly biblical ones (Kofoed 2002:40). On the more conservative side of the field stand both Israeli and American archaeologists who, in a customized manner, have followed the traditions of the biblical archaeological movement. Mazar, Yadin, Kitchen, Hoffmeier, Currid, Yamauchi, and others, tend to critically accept the storyline of the Bible and they attempt to support its general authenticity and provide supporting data for biblical scholars. Though Dever has been actively publishing and contending

against the revisionists, in his view there was no exodus, no sojourn in the wilderness,

and no military conquest of Canaan.

> And, as we have seen, archaeological investigation of Moses and the
> Exodus has similarly been discarded as a fruitless pursuit. Indeed, the
> overwhelming archaeological evidence today of largely indigenous origins
> for early Israel leaves no room for an exodus from Egypt or a 40-year
> pilgrimage through the Sinai wilderness….As for Leviticus and Numbers,
> these are clearly additions to the "pre-history" by very late Priestly
> editorial hands, preoccupied with notions of ritual purity, themes of the
> "promised land," and other literary motifs that most modern readers will
> scarcely find edifying, much less historical.

(Dever 2001:98, 99)

There remains quite a diversity of views regarding the origins of Israel as a nation.

Dever, like many other archaeologists, often dismiss or devalue the historical value of the

biblical story as well as ancient Near East texts, tending to place greater confidence in

material evidence produced from excavations and the interpretations of this evidence. A

survey of archaeological practice and theory will imply an imbalance in the evidential

weighting of the data. Furthermore, a broader examination of historical epistemology

and a review of the current archaeological positions, will find that an entire renunciation

of the Old Testament's value as a potential source for historical data is unwarranted.

2.2   The archaeological task

The actual practice of archaeology involves excavating ancient sites, recovering material

remains, documenting and recording their findings, and finally, interpreting and reporting

the results. This chapter will review the inherent difficulties in tell excavation and

analysis that makes interpretation for the archaeologist difficult and largely indefinite.

Archaeology, by its very nature is not an exacting science compared to physics, biology, chemistry, and mathematics; it is inherently more subjective and interpretive by nature. One of the essential problems is that nearly all tells, the most crucial type of archaeological site, have been occupied numerous times and with each new habitation there is acute and intentional corruption of previous occupations.

Currid (1999:44-47) documents the six types of complications found, in some measure, at nearly every tell. Pits, found at almost every archaeological site, were most commonly used for grain storage, but may also have been used as latrines, ovens, cisterns or garbage dumps. As new occupants arrived to refurbish a site, they sometimes changed the usage of the pit. The difficulty these present is that the occupants who initially dug the pit were intruding into earlier occupational layers, moving some of its content to another area on the site, and ultimately destroying the earlier materials. Debris that blows into an unoccupied site is known as a fill. Fills also occur when humans move packing materials from other parts of a site trying to level an area for renewed occupation. Obviously fills displace materials and make discernment of strata quite complicated for the archaeologist. Foundation trenches also complicate the process of strata determination as ancient builders often dug a footing or foundation trench into an earlier level of the site to begin constructing a new wall, thus creating a disturbance in a previous level and movement of that same material to a different level. Likewise, burial sites present the same disturbance and transfer of materials from lower levels of occupation to higher. Erosion, often caused by torrential rains, produces wash, when materials from one level are pushed and moved down slopes into previous levels of occupation. Other forces of nature also damage and obscure archaeological sites.

Blowing sand, debris, and vegetative overgrowth during times when the sites were abandoned have to be accounted for. Human activity, especially in the form of rebuilding, can mutilate a site. Renovation and expansion are common phenomena in ancient cities as major modifications and movement of materials were undertaken to redesign and reestablish new communities on old sites.

All of these factors contribute to make the interpretation of stratum in a given tell a thorny and tenuous assignment. This is not to say that these difficulties make archaeological work impossible or its finding reckless. This is only to portray the task as more complicated than often thought by the novice or uninitiated. Stratigraphic analysis is intrinsically difficult and perplexing.

Furthermore, site identification continues to be problematic for archaeologists as few sites are found that have direct evidence of their name. Therefore, textual evidence from biblical and extra-biblical sources is brought together with topographical information, and consideration of the relationships between known sites. If excavation is completed on an unknown site, sometimes the evidence from occupational levels aid in determining a positive identification (Hess 1996:61-62). Sometimes the modern name of a tell: has remained the same as the ancient tell, has been retained with some variation, or has been converted to Arabic. But modern nomination is certainly not a strong basis for bringing final resolution to identification. As a consequence, many sites, including important ones, remain unidentified or controvertible.

Surveying, a practice of emerging significance, is conducted on both localized sites and larger regions, involving an examination of the surface remains and features of a specific area. The surveying method is well known to be economical and gathers a large

quantity of information quickly. However, surveying has been criticized by various quarters of the archaeological community. Dever (2003:93) reports three misgivings about surveys: (1) many smaller sites in a region are often missed or lost because they are grown over, obscured or weathered (2) surface remains are undoubtedly from the last occupation or occupation(s) of a site, and (3) they are misleading because the evidence is limited, worn, and remnant. While Currid (1999:51) has a general confidence in surveying he acknowledges that the method of surveying necessarily retrieves a small and late sampling of materials, leaving considerable room for interpretive imprecision. Therefore, both excavating and surveying, from a practical perspective, are far from being exacting projects, such that interpretations and hypotheses need to be weighed and judiciously considered.

Archaeology is never going to achieve the highest level of certitude, being able to soundly "prove" or "disprove" biblical history, especially its specific storyline, because of the very nature of the enterprise. Archaeology is different from the hard sciences that test in the present. Like all historical endeavors, a substantial measure of interpretation is required of past data that cannot be known for certain in the present. 'For all these and other reasons, I suggest that archaeologists ought rarely to use the word "proof," because the kind of verification that is possible in sciences that investigate the physical world is simply not obtainable for material-culture remains, even though they are also physical objects' (Dever 2001:71). Archaeologists should employ a more tentative language that revolves around terms like probable, possible, likelihood, prospect, or potential, rather than determinative statements about fact and proof. 'All historians deal with possibilities, at best probabilities, never with certainties' (Dever 2001:78).

Archaeology needs to be viewed as providing data to historians and to be subservient to the broader field of historiography. Wright (1971:75) illustrates the problem of archaeologists making claims without consulting any other related fields, a temptation that has always been present. In 1958, Rhys Carpenter made the assertion that the Phoenician cities Cadiz and Utica did not exist much before 700 B.C., contrary to previous estimates of ca. 1100 B.C., and without consulting any other fields. In short order, mounting evidence, from outside and inside the field of archaeology, brought his views into disrepute. Ultimately, archaeology is at its best when it is contributing social, cultural, and material backgrounds to the broader field of history and biblical studies.

2.3   An historical and archaeological evaluation of the wilderness sojourn

For the purposes of assessing if there is a historical basis for the biblical tradition of the wilderness sojourn, it is incumbent that measured conclusions be made about the two momentous events which bracket the wilderness sojourn: Israel's habitation in Egypt, and the emergence of Israelites in Canaan. While direct evidence supporting the biblical data in this era is absent, some credible circumstantial evidence supports a segment of the biblical story. I will examine the three major epochs separately, as each has its own peculiarities from a historical perspective. I will argue that there remains ostensive evidence to suggest that a group of Israelites did abide in Egypt, traverse the Sinai wilderness, and in some fashion invade or settle in the land of Canaan.

2.3.1   Israel in Egypt

The case for Israel's presence in Egypt has to be developed in an indirect manner as to date, no direct evidence has been uncovered, no artifactual or monumental finds, which confirm Israel's presence in Egypt during the second millennium (Hoffmeier 1997:x). However, there are other sorts of historical data that contribute to a conclusion which ascribe plausibility to Israel's residence in Egypt during the latter half of the second millennium B.C. Several pieces of data verify that the biblical tradition of Israel's presence in Egypt correlates to the social, cultural, and geographical milieu of second millennium Egypt.

From the outset, it needs to be asserted that the absence of material remains relating to Israel in the region does not, by default, mean that Israelites did not have a presence in Egypt. It is not surprising that no archaeological testimony has been recovered that testifies to Israel's presence in Egypt. The general proposition holds that the further one explores backwards in time, the more obscured or reduced will be the existence of evidence. Geographically, according to the biblical record, Israel dwelt in Goshen (Gn 45:10), in the northern delta region of Egypt, a location having minimal archaeological activity, until most recently. In the past, Egyptologists have neglected the region because the area has been heavily farmed, previously pillaged, and possesses a high water table—all undesirable conditions for excavators (Hoffmeier 1997:62).

Further on this point, the nature and tenor of Egyptian record keeping makes it questionable whether they would even consider documenting history regarding the Israelites because, (1) the Israelites were considered lowly slaves leading up to the exodus (Grimal 1992:258); (2) the Egyptians, like other ancient Near East civilizations,

45

boasted about themselves and they did not tend to commend rivals or perceived inferiors and; (3) according to the biblical narrative, upon Israel's departure, the Pharaoh and the nation were duped, embarrassed, and suffered losses, the kinds of events almost always absent from ancient Near East records (Kitchen 2003:246).

Considering these obstacles, the probability of finding material or documentary evidence of Israel's presence in Egypt is improbable and should not be expected. Nonetheless, considerable strands of collateral evidence give credibility to the biblical account of Israel's sojourn in Egypt. The Joseph narratives from Genesis 37-50, and the Exodus narratives from Exodus 1-14, fit the material and cultural setting of Middle Bronze Egypt, containing many points of contact that suggest historical veracity. The corresponding trends in Egypt during the Late Bronze Age are uniform with the patterns described in the biblical accounts.

Epigraphic evidence from Egypt in the First Intermediate Period and Middle Period ('The Instruction of King Merikare' and the 'Prophecy of Neferti', respectively) suggest Egypt was feeling the pressure of Asiatics who were entering Egypt's north eastern border to enjoy its bounty (Herrmann 1973:8-10; Hoffmeier 1997:54-59). Aware of the threat and incursion, Egypt was taking steps to protect its borders. Also, multiple archaeological sites in the northern delta region (Tell el-Dabᶜa, Tell el-Maskhuta, and Tell el-Retabeh, to name a few), dating to the Middle Bronze era, manifest remains that are undeniably Canaanite. The epigraphic and archaeological record suggests that a pattern of Asiatic infiltration into Egypt's northern delta existed, often because of climactic or drought conditions in the Levant (Hoffmeier 1997:63-68). This does not

prove Israel's presence in Egypt, of course, but demonstrates the putative consistency of the biblical tradition of Israel's sojourn in Egypt during the Middle Bronze era.

Several socio-political features of the Joseph narratives correspond to the cultural situation and practice of the Egyptians. Asiatic slavery in Egypt is evidenced in Middle Bronze II consistent with Joseph's sale into slavery and his subsequent service in an eminent household in Egypt. For example: 'On the reverse of Papyrus Brooklyn 35.1446 is a list of some seventy-nine servants bequeathed by a man to his wife, *ca*. 1740 B.C. More than forty of these servants were explicitly labeled "Asiatics,"' (Kitchen 1982:1127). And coincidentally, the purchase price for a slave in the 18th century B.C. according to Hammurabi's Code was 20 shekels—the same price paid by the Midianites for Joseph (Gn 37:28) (Kitchen 1982:1127). Joseph's assignment of his family to the land of Goshen was practically suitable for his family as, (1) the area was largely undeveloped in the 2nd millennium B.C., (2) the delta region already had 'Asiatics' infiltrating the area, (3) it was a fertile location, excellent for grazing cattle, with scrub and marsh lands and, (4) was in close proximity to Joseph (Kitchen 1982:1129).

Some may question the veracity of Joseph's raise to prominence in Egypt as merely 'a rags to riches' myth; after all, would the Pharaoh really honor and champion a Semite to such a prominent role of power, as depicted in the biblical account? While the details of the Egyptian rank structure are convoluted, there are examples of such Semitic advancement taking place. Most prominent is the recent find of a tomb in Saqqara bearing the body of a vizier, along with his wife and son, named Aper-el; decidedly the name is Semitic in origin, as is the practice of group burial, a custom of Late Bronze Age Canaan, not Egypt. Aper-el supervised the king's affairs in Lower Egypt during the last

years of Amenhotep III and into the reign of Akhenaten (Hoffmeier 1997:95). Furthermore, the mummification of this Semitic ruler equivocates the embalming of Joseph's body (Gn 50:26), a practice foreign to the Canaanites. Likewise the time required for the embalming process, a narratorial addition to the biblical text (Gn 50:3), conforms to descriptions from fourteenth century B.C. inscriptions (Garner 1983:178, 179).

Turning to the exodus account, the geographical significance of Exodus 1:11 detailing the forced labor at the store house cities of Pithom and Rameses have attracted considerable interest. Pithom's location remains elusive to archaeologists, once suspected to be Tell el-Maskhuta or neighboring Tell el-Retabeh, but material remains in these sites have not conformed to conditions in the mid-13th century B.C. However, Rameses has been positively identified as Tell el-Dab'a (Dever 2003:14). Tell el-Dab'a provides substantive evidence of occupation as a sizable royal city during the time of Ramesses II. The city of Rameses was abandoned as a royal city by circa 1130 B.C. and was largely dismantled, as stonework from her temples were used to erect new buildings in nearby Tanis (Kitchen 2003:255-256). Therefore, the biblical writer's use of Rameses required early knowledge, or access to written tradition, in order to have accurately portrayed Rameses as a store house city, such accurate knowledge largely presupposes a historical basis for the narrative, rather than a mythological one.

The names of four Egyptians provided in the biblical text of Genesis: Potipher (Gn 39:1), Asenath, Potipherah, and Zaphenath-peneah (Gn 41:45) suggest authentic Egyptian origins or knowledge. While the etymological details of these names have been debated, Egypto-Semitic specialists all agree that they are undeniably and

incontrovertibly Egyptian (Hoffmeier 1997:87). Similarly, the names of Hebrew

characters: Moses, Hophni, Phinehas, and the midwives, Shiphrah and Puah, are derived

etymologically from Egyptian (Dever 1997:68); and to this list Anderson (1998:52) adds

Merari and possibly Aaron. Postulating that late writers used these names to support an

Egyptian *Sitz im Leben* for the biblical narratives, Dever, as others, have questioned the

historicity of the Exodus narrative, wondering why the name of the ruling Pharaoh, one

of the foremost characters in the drama is excluded, as if his name was unknown (cf.

Redmount 1998:95). Yet a significant case can be made that the names of both Pharaohs

in the Exodus narrative are omitted by the author for theological and dramatic literary

purposes. In the same way as Naomi's near kinsman is unnamed in Ruth 4, likewise the

Pharaohs are not honored with nomination. In this way the biblical writer casts judgment

against the Pharaohs and their moral character demurring them as enemies of God and

Israel, relegating them as unknowns in God's record of history. In contrast to the

despotic Pharaoh, the Hebrew midwives who are distinguished with being named, Sarna

(1991:7); states: '[I]n the biblical scale of values these lowly champions of morality

assume a far greater historic importance than all the powerful tyrants who ruled Egypt'

(cf. Fretheim 1991:34; Davies 1992:79). In a similar vein, Hoffmeier (1997:109-110) has

revealed the common practice of New Kingdom Pharaohs omitting the names of defeated

kings and rulers from inscriptional victory accounts; directly contrary to the practice of

Assyrian, Babylonian and Aramean rulers of the same era. This itself, may give more

credibility to an Egyptian setting for the writing of the exodus account. So rather than the

biblical omission of names for Egypt's Pharaohs being an informational bungling, and a

detraction from the historical validity of the Exodus narrative, the lacuna could be viewed

as an intentional literary and theological feature employed by the biblical writer to relegate the memory of the evil Pharaohs to an oral past, and to subliminally censure Israel's oppressors.

While there remain considerable gaps and contentions relating to Israel's habitation of Egypt, as should be expected, the evidence sited, at least suggests there is some conformity between the elements of the biblical tradition and the social-cultural patterns of Middle Bronze Egypt. Redmount (1998:84) surveys the evidence and the state of the scholarship surrounding the exodus and states: 'there is less agreement than ever as to the history, development, and character of the Exodus account, and biblical scholarship in general is in ferment.' While clearly, the biblical account is theological in nature, and ancient in worldview, it remains prudent to maintain the possibility of some historical value in the traditions that lie under the layers of theology and worldview.

2.3.2   Israel's invasion of Canaan

In the past half century, the traditional conquest model and biblical description of Israel's conquest into Canaan has been under serious attack by archaeologists. This was precipitated by: (1) the lack of direct evidence of Israel's presence in Egypt, and the wilderness, (2) the limited signs of destruction to Late Bronze Age sites in Canaan and there being no archaeological evidence of a Late Bronze Age settlement at Heshbon, Ai, nor Gibeon; (Yamauchi 1994:15), and (3) the apparent Canaanization of Israelite settlers in the hill country during Iron Age I. Stager (1998:137) reports of Israel's cultural remains: 'The evidence from language, costume, coiffure, and material remains suggest that the early Israelites were a rural subset of Canaanite culture and largely

50

indistinguishable from Transjordanian rural cultures as well.' The common features of pre-monarchic Israel include: pillared houses, collared-rim storage jars, terracing, and cisterns (Stager 1998:140). As a result of these general findings, several models (with variations) emerged that refuted a military invasion of the land and depicts Israel as largely indigenous to Canaan.

Alt (1966:175-221), and later his student Noth (1958:141-163), initiated the Peaceful Infiltration model (sometimes called the Pastoral Nomad Hypothesis) on the basis of archaeological evidence, as well as a consideration of the book of Judges and its indecisive description of occupation. Alt felt that the Israelites were previously nomadic people originating in the desert or desert fringes, who infiltrated Canaan in a peaceful manner. Aharoni (1982) believed Israel first settled in the sparely populated areas in southern Upper Galilee, the hill country, and the Negev. Volkmar Fritz (1994:138) felt the early settlers were seminomads who, intermittently at first and over a longer period of time, turned to agriculture in order to survive, which is known as the symbiosis hypothesis (Yamauchi 1994:16-17). Finkelstein has largely adopted Alt's model suggesting the early Israelites came from a pastoralist background—shepherding flocks, not camels—shepherds who originated on the fringes of settled areas, not the desert (Finkelstein 1988:338). While the peaceful infiltration model is currently the most conventional view of archaeologists, the peasant revolt model provided sociological data that contributed to the development of the peaceful infiltration theory.

Contributing social theory to the study of Israel's origins were Mendenhall (1973:183-197) and Gottwald (1979:489-587) who, though not ideologically unified, suggested that the conflict in Canaan was not between shepherd and farmer, but between

classes, urban and rural—a Peasant Revolt Hypothesis. They suggested that the lifestyle

of nomadic pastoralists was not so isolationist and confrontational as previously thought,

but initially at least, this new group called Israel, would have generally coexisted with

their neighbors, and built relationships for social and economic exchange (Finkelstein

1988:306-307). Mendenhall's and Gottwald's theory shared much in common,

particularly that the revolution was believed to be internal. However, the two theories

clashed because in Gottwald's approach, in wide contrast to Mendenhall, was Marxist in

orientation which envisioned peasants revolting against their overlords in a class struggle

for liberation. And also, the two highly disagreed about the nature of Yahwism. Though

the peasant revolt model was considered provocative at the time, it was not highly

acclaimed (Dever 2003:54). While Finkelstein (1988:308) and Dever (2003:53)

appreciate the application of social science to archaeology, they view Mendenhall's and

Gottwald's synthesis of the archaeological data as incomplete and simplistic.

One has to ask then, how strong is the evidence that supports the peaceful

infiltration model? If this model is correct, it then largely relegates the narrative biblical

material from Genesis to Judges as folklore, and ahistorical in nature. Such an

acceptance would radically affect the interpretation of Israel's pre-monarchic past. What

follows is a consideration of the fundamental data used to support the model.

There exists a robust consensus, that the archaeological record purports Israel's

appearance in Canaan (by either: conquest, infiltration, or resedentarization, etc.) during

the late 13th century and at the end of the Late Bronze Age. Some conservatives such as

Eugene Merrill (1995:162) and Bryant Wood (2005:489) still propose an earlier 15th

century exodus and contend that evidence for a conquest in the 13th century is actually

evidence of the warring activity in the era of the book of Judges. However, the corresponding archaeological evidence is less convincing than that of a 13th century conquest as refuted by Kenneth Kitchen (2003:310).

The conspicuous proliferation of rural settlements in the southern hill country between the Late Bronze and Iron I period marks the influx of Israel into the land of Canaan (Stager 1998:135). Dever (2003:97) surveyed the data and reports an increase from 58 Late Bronze Age sites in Canaan to approximately 350 in the Iron I period and that the population growth between the 13th and 11th century B.C. approximately triples (cf. Finkelstein 1988:333; Stager 1998:135). Signaling the influx of an immigrant population is the material culture of these proposed Israelite sites which is austere in comparison to the more cosmopolitan Canaanite wares (Redmount 1998:95). As for evidence of destruction and warfare in the Late Bronze Age within Canaan, there is conflicting data.

The well known variance between the excavations of Jericho first completed by John Garstang (1930-1936) and later by Kathleen Kenyon (1952-1958) has done more to confuse the actual value of the results than afford a sound evaluation. Garstang, using unsophisticated but standard methods and assumptions of his time, reported finding a series of four walls surrounding Tell es-Sultan with the outer wall showing signs of collapse attributed to *circa* 1400 B.C. Using improved methods, particularly with pottery analysis, Kenyon demonstrated that the history of the Bronze Age walls at Jericho is quite complex. Ultimately Kenyon concluded that very little of the Late Bronze town site remains, and no part of the town walls remain. The pottery artifacts suggest the town site was destroyed in the last quarter of the 14th century B.C. and was abandoned until Iron II

(Kenyon 1982:993-995). While Kenyon's work affirmed the existence of a Late Bronze Age Jericho with a subsequent destruction, the dating of that destruction is under dispute (Howard 1993:85). Consequently, the archaeological evidence from Jericho demonstrates marginal, if any, affinity with the biblical tradition and is much less affirming than Garstang's original claims.

While excavations of both Hazor and Bethel reveal a clear destruction level in the 13th century, corroborating the biblical account, Ai is completely contrary (Stager 1998:129-130). Excavation of Ai in the 1930's, disclosed that the fortified city, well developed with temples and palaces, was destroyed around 2200 B.C. After only minor reoccupations over the next seven centuries, it was completely uninhabited from 1500 B.C. until the early 12th century B.C.—the expected time of Joshua's siege of the city (Dever 2003:47). However, Kitchen (2003:188-189) contends that excavation at Et-Tell remains incomplete, that the identification of Et-Tell as Ai is questionable.

The archaeological findings at Hazor, the third city that was reportedly destroyed and burned according to Joshua 11:11, demonstrate a strong affinity to the biblical record. Most recent excavations by Ben-Tor in the 1990's has reported that not only was the massive 200 acre lower city destroyed in the 13th century B.C. but also an acropolis was destroyed and burned in a massive fire leaving behind shattered and discolored rocks. Moreover, at this site, Egyptian statues were destroyed with deliberation by the assailants. Ben-Tor dates this destruction to the latter half of the 13th century B.C. Dever (2003:67, 68) also notes the epigraphic evidence from Mari in the 18th century B.C. which acknowledges a dynastic king from Hazor named 'Ibni' which translates to Hebrew as 'Yabin' (יָבִין), corresponding to the name of the king of the city destroyed

by Joshua (Jos 11:1). Therefore, the archaeological evidence from Hazor provides the most persuasive substantiation of an invasion-like destruction as described in Joshua 11.

One of the critical pieces of data in this debate is the Merneptah Stele, also known as the Israel Stele—the earliest known, non-biblical reference to Israel as a people group (Stiebing 2003:209). The stone monument was discovered at Merneptah's mortuary temple at Thebes that describes his victories against rebel forces of Libyans and Sea Peoples in the Levant. The stele includes a line stating: 'Israel is laid waste, his seed is not.' Dated to *circa* 1210 B.C., the translation of the text has been questioned by some, but '….the notion that the reading "Israel" is questionable is astounding. No competent Egyptologist has ever read it otherwise' (Dever 2003:192). The inscription includes a determinative meaning 'people' for Israel, 'correctly distinguished as a rural or tribal entity' (Stager 1998:124), as opposed to the determinative for 'nation' that was used of the other three conquered peoples on the stele (Ashkelon, Gezer, and Yanoam). Logically, the statement that Israel's seed is 'no more,' does not have to be taken literally to suggest complete annihilation as ancient Near East battle reports, as a genre are replete with embellished language. What the stele does establish is that by *circa* 1210 B.C.: (1) Israel was a recognizable polity to the Egyptians, and (2) Israel had the military significance to attract Egypt's military wrath, and likewise possessed the notoriety to be included in Egypt's monumental record. 'The mention of Israel in the Merneptah stela (ca. 1208 B.C.) suggests that tribal Israel was already a significant presence in the Levant prior to the sedentarization described in Finkelstein's masterful study' (Hoffmeier 1997:33). This early date for an established Israel, not a single tribe, but a confederation of tribes as envisioned in the Song of Deborah, puts a tremendous strain on non-conquest

theories which see Israel forming over time in the swell of population leading up until the 11ᵗʰ century B.C. (Bimson 1991:19).

How to proceed with the modestly conflicting data concerning the archaeological evidence for Israel's conquest into Canaan places one at a crossroad. If one opts for a non-conquest model, then this relegates much of the biblical data of the sojourn to the status of folklore, etiological mythology, or a fanciful creation of an ahistorical nature (Hoffmeier 2005:8). The evidence to conclusively substantiate the case for any of the existing models falls short. In like manner, the evidence, at this time, is not sufficiently compelling so as to accept a non-conquest model. In addition, the consistency of the biblical account of Israel's presence in Egypt supplies enough support to tacitly accept that Israel migrated from Egypt to Canaan in some fashion. I make this inference against non-conquest models on two major bases.

First, the small sampling of archaeological data, on which new hypotheses are formed, are such a minute collection of the potential evidence that it surely warrants caution, and may lead interpreters in erroneous directions. Archaeologists acknowledge that massive amounts of archaeological remains have been swept away by wind and rain erosion, consumed by decay, and pilfered by humans. Yamauchi (1972:ch 4 passim) has carefully chronicled numerous examples that demonstrate the considerable amounts of artifactual remains, papyri, stone inscriptions, and buildings that have been lost to the forces of nature and to human interference—never to be recovered. There remains only a shadow of what once existed. Furthermore, only a small fraction—less than 2% according to Yamauchi's estimate in 1972—of known archaeological sites in Palestine have been professionally excavated. Since then, this percentage may have improved

marginally, but new sites tend to be discovered at a rate much faster than excavation can ever proceed. Also, political tensions and wars in the Middle East have seriously hindered archaeological efforts. Most notably is Iraq; though rich in ancient history and a landscape abundant in mounds, restricted access to the region has resulted in very limited excavating. Compounding the disappointing progress is the serious problem of archaeologists failing to publish the results of their excavations. Not wholly the fault of archaeologists—the publication of results takes far more time than the digging, the shear volume of data to analyze, and often the lack of funding, makes publication of the data an arduous task. A 1994 article by Herschel Shanks estimated that between 1980 and 1989, only 13% of site reports of ancient Near East digs had been published, the remainder being inaccessible to other professionals (Shanks 1994:64). Furthermore, Mary Mills highlights the problematic nature of archaeological evidence: 'There is, of course, a basic problem with all this material. It is largely non-written, non-textual and so cannot be compared directly with the picture of affairs presented in the OT, which is written and textual' (Mills 2006:53). Therefore, the archaeological evidence for Israel's origins (conquest versus non-conquest models) continues to be conflicting, ambiguous, and indeterminate. Combined with the notion that the sample of data is so diminutive, it is not yet time, in my opinion, to expressly discount the biblical tradition of Israel's invasion into the land of Canaan (cf. Hoerth 1998:22).

Second, the disjunction between the descriptions of Israel's conquest and early occupation of the land needs serious consideration. The genre of the book of Joshua reports the conquest as a triumphal theological victory, in the same pattern of contemporary battle reports in the ancient Near East. Yet a detailed reading of Joshua for

data about the invasion alone finds the marks on the land to be much more limited. This

diminished perspective of Joshua's report, combined with the protracted and inefficient

occupation of Canaan described in Judges, will approximate more closely the current

findings of archaeology. An apparent tension exists between the invasion of Canaan

described in Joshua and the more variegated description of Israel in Canaan envisioned in

the book of Judges. This interpretive dilemma needs to be scrutinized before a

comparison can be made of the biblical data with the archaeological.

A surface reading of Joshua portrays a remarkably successful military campaign

of Canaan: 'So Joshua subdued the whole region, including the hill country, the Negev,

the western foothills and the mountain slopes, together with all their kings. He left no

survivors. He totally destroyed all who breathed, just as the Lord, the God of Israel, had

commanded' (Js 10:40); is representative of the optimistic declarations concerning

Israel's military campaigns. While some have tended to embellish the scale, violence,

and domination of Joshua's conquest, an examination of the broader text, minus the

rhetorical and theological exuberance, suggests a more limited, modest incursion. This

has set the stage for a 'straw man' argument. For example, archaeologists have made

considerable efforts to locate abounding evidence of Joshua's invasion in either the 15th

or 13th century B.C., looking for evidence of massive and violent destruction. Yet, to

date, the evidence of destroyed cities, particularly with incineration, has been minimal for

the 13th century B.C. and less so for the 15th century B.C. This has caused some

archaeologists to be very skeptical towards the historical trustworthiness of Joshua, to

doubt an invasion model of Canaan, and to develop non-conquest models—Alt's

infiltration theory, Mendenhall's *peasant revolt theory*, and Gottwald's *social revolution*

theory—to explain Israel's arrival in the land. However, the text of Joshua explicitly describes the loss of life and the thinning of the Canaanite population, but the destruction of properties was minimal. According to the text of Joshua, only Jericho (Jos 6:24), Ai (Jos 8:28) and Hazor (Jos 11:13), were burned, and to a large extent, destroyed. The חֵרֶם that was to be exacted against the Canaanites was a destruction of the population, not their properties. In fact, the war policy and assumption in Deuteronomy was that Israel would reap the spoils of a well developed civilization upon completion of the conquest of Canaan (Dt 6:10, 11). Further, while the book of Joshua highlights many military victories in Canaan, it does not adequately describe the protracted task of settlement and occupation of the land the way that the book of Judges does. Yet, to be fair to the book of Joshua, there are references after the three major campaigns that suggest the invasion was deficient (Jos 13:1-7; 17:12-18). Hoffmeier (1997:34), relying on work by Abraham Malamat, notes that the language used to describe the battles during Israel's attacks against their enemies, and the indirect military strategies used by the Israelites suggest that 'we should expect only limited, if any, discernible destruction in the archaeological record.' Bimson (1991:19) and others, suggest that the sharp escalation in population and increased number of settlements, particularly in the hill country, in the Iron I period are more reflective of the sedentarization of Israel, rather than an indication of the nation's origins or the invasion of the land. The book of Judges portrays the program of continuing eradication of the population and settling in the areas not occupied or fully subdued in the initial invasion by Joshua's army. It is a misstep then, for archaeologists to search for a swift, broad and massive destruction marking the conquest of Canaan (Long 1994:163).

2.3.3 Israel's sojourn in the wilderness

There are many formidable historians and theologians that hold to an affirmation of the exodus, sojourn and conquest and for weighty reasons beyond archaeology. Nahum Sarna comments on the proposed models for the Egyptian sojourn and states:

> ….no single theory provides a satisfactory solution to all the problems, and each is itself beset by freshly introduced obscurities. One thing, however, seems certain: The Egyptian oppression of the Israelites cannot possibly be fictional. The sojourn in Egypt provides a theme of paramount and fundamental importance in the historical consciousness and religious development of the people of Israel. No nation would be likely to invent for itself, and faithfully transmit century after century and millennium after millennium, an inglorious and inconvenient tradition of this nature unless it had an authentic core.

> (Sarna 1988:37)

Sarna's comment upholds the historical and theological significance of the migration from Egypt acknowledging, along with others, that archaeology will likely find little, if any material evidence at all, that establishes Israel's presence in the wilderness. 'If indeed the Israelites are to be pictured as a band of wanderers, or even semi-sedentary pastoralists, we would still probably find no remains of their ephemeral camps in the desert' (Dever 1997:71, 72).

In summarizing the data related to the Exodus tradition, Stiebing (2003:242) states: 'Some scholars also question the historicity of the Exodus, but most agree that at least a portion of the later population of Israel was in Egypt for a time. The majority generally consider it unlikely that any nation would invent a tradition that its founders had suffered shameful slavery in a foreign land.' While Stiebing does expect that the traditions contain discrepancies, folklore, and exaggerations in numbers, he accepts the

60

elemental historical outline of events. He cites as evidence, the Egyptian derivation of names including: Moses, Phinehas, Hophni, and Merari, as well as the agreement between biblical account of Israel's force labor in building cities for the unnamed Pharaoh and the supporting archaeological evidence of the building of PiRamesse (Stiebing 2003:243). Likewise, Grabbe acknowledges the lack of external evidence to support the exodus and wilderness tradition but concedes: 'This does not rule out the possibility that the text contains a distant—and distorted—memory of an actual event' (Grabbe 2007:88). Budd (1984:xxvii) concludes that all three views (conquest, immigration, and revolt) have their strengths and weaknesses, 'and a sophisticated account of Israel's origins may have to allow for elements from all the models. Even so some may have had a greater potential for refinement, and one may be more fundamentally accurate than others.'

In summary, there continues to be benign uniformity between the biblical account of Israel's presence Egypt and socio-cultural conditions in Egypt during the Late Bronze Age. Also, the evidence for non-conquest models in Canaan is not so formidable as to trigger an outright rejection of the biblical tradition. As there is circumstantial support for Israel's presence in Egypt and the undisputed appearance of Israel in Canaan in Iron Age I, it remains a strong potentiality that some group of Israelites made a journey from one land to the other. While the exact route, chronology, and number of sojourners continue to be in dispute, the elemental historicity of the wilderness sojourn should be provisionally accepted. An examination of the broader field of historiography proposes a wider horizon and philosophic approach should be undertaken for historical reconstruction.

2.4.1   Historiography and archaeology

A necessary beginning point for this section is to have a working definition of history and

historiography. Van Seters (1997:1) prefers the broad definition of history proposed by

Dutch historian J. Huizinga; 'History is the intellectual form in which a civilization

renders account to itself of its past.' This definition narrowly focuses on the final

product, confining history to only those texts that are self-aware in their historical intent

and which are broadly nationalistic. This approach is too reductionist in orientation and

is not practical, particularly for biblical application. A more detailed and inclusive

definition is contributed by Yamauchi which is more specific to the task of ancient

historical reconstruction:

> History is the study of what people have done and said and thought in the
> past. Historians attempt to reconstruct in a significant narrative the
> important events of the human past through study of the relevant data.
> History involves primarily the interpretation of textual accounts
> supplemented by contemporary inscriptions and other materials recovered
> by archaeology.

<div align="right">(Yamauchi 1994:1)</div>

In this definition, and by the nature of this field of enquiry, archaeology is subsumed in

the field of historiography as a contributor of source data and is not the necessary arbiter

of conclusions as archaeological data needs to be examined in conjunction with other

historical and textual data, biblical and extra-biblical.

   Historiography is broader in scope, accepting all texts as potential sources of

historical data (Van Seters 1997:2), contingent on certain criteria, of course. Most

obviously, texts must self-evidently presuppose truthfulness.

Nevertheless….histories purport to be true, or probable, representations of events and relationships in the past. They make this claim as to particular allegations: the people they describe, the significant actions they describe, are historical, authentic. This definition of historiography means that it always has a subject: it can be about one thing, and ignore other things; but it must always be *about something* (some sequence of events or set of relationships)

(Halpern 1988:6-7)

Such a definition of historiography, being expansive in scale, must come attached with presuppositions to be used judiciously.

Historiography is a discipline that implicitly requires interpretation and weighing of evidence. 'History is a human enterprise of chronologically selecting and recording events in time and space and doing so interpretively or with a particular perspective. The requirement that history be objective is an artificial requirement' (Martens 1994:324). Not only is historiography a field that deals in interpretation, but its product is a history, a historical writing that is in kind very different from the events they portray. This has been a philosophic issue in the sciences in recent decades, as the product of a historian is but a reconstruction, a 'portraiture' of the past in written form, that cannot be tested in the present by any scientific or instrumental means. Commenting on the growing awareness of this within historiography, Striver (2001:57-58) states: '…history and fiction are both fundamentally hermeneutical projects….It is now much more readily recognized than it was a century ago that historiography is itself a work of the productive imagination, representing a particular cast on a time and place.' Some question whether history is even a science at all, because historians have an inability to test in the present, and the influence of presuppositions and pre-understandings upon its practitioners (Provan, Long & Longman 2003:43). Consequently, the philosophical underpinnings, presuppositions,

63

pre-understandings, and methods of the historian become central to determining the results of their research.

Modern historiography has been shaped by certain transitions that took place in ideology, originating with the Enlightenment. At the dawn of the modern age, there was a shift in epistemology that gave greatest significance to knowledge that was scientifically verifiable, and consequently denigrated of testimonies and traditions that were passed down from the pre-critical past. Philosophy and history gave way to science as the new authority under the sway of Francis Bacon (1561-1626) and Rene Descartes (1596-1650) as all knowledge, including knowledge of the past, was to be critically assessed on the basis of deductive reason, rejecting ideas that are not known to be true, and building upon the knowledge that is known (Hakim 1992:294-299). This renewed spirit of scientific enterprise was meant to produce certitude and a solid basis for human knowledge and further scientific development. This modern scientific approach to epistemology brought suspicion and distrust in materials that could not be validated by scientific experimentation, possessing significant repercussions for the field of history, and specifically biblical historiography, which is essentially dependant on voices from antiquity, mostly unverifiable by modern scientific method.

The innovative German historian Leopold Ranke (1795-1886) sought to examine documents with a critical attitude toward texts, attempting to discern an objective set of facts, without preconceptions and presuppositions. This positivistic view of knowledge attempted to reconstruct the absolute truth about the past, by sifting all the relevant data and producing a universal history, using proper scientific methods, without a concern for interpretation or meaning of these historical facts (Provan, Long, Longman 2003:21). In

64

her presidential address to the Society of Biblical Literature in 1987, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza specifically called for movement away from the scientific approach to history that grew out of the nineteenth century with its 'scientist ethos' and 'objective scientism' that was in turn appropriated by biblical scholarship (Schüssler Fiorenza 1988:10-12). Though lamenting the historical scientism of previous generations, she postulated a rhetorical hermeneutic that sought historical readings with an ethics of accountability to the modern situation.

In the twentieth century, historians have moved away from positivism and into a model that searches to understand the forces that have moved and shaped history, broadening the field of history to include the fields of sociology, geography, demographics, economics, anthropology and political theory. This appeal to the sciences helped to bolster the respectability of historians because of the general effrontery towards the field which relies on unverifiable testimonies of the past to gather evidence (Provan, Long, Longman 2003:23). This reinforcement of modern scientific theory, served to deepen the distrust of testimonies and traditions from the past which are perceived as unreliable and highly tainted.

Several presuppositions, without critical assessment, have developed in modern historiography as a consequence of this exaltation of empirical data as the basis of knowledge. First, there has grown a distinct wariness for testimonies passed down to the present. Second, because ancient texts evidence particular ideologies and points of view (often conflicting with modern worldview), they are viewed as corrupted and do not possess an accurate portrayal of the past. Addressing the proliferation of conquest theories in the past century, V. Phillips Long (1994:161) attributes 'the modernist

assumption that texts in which divine agency plays any part are to be considered historically suspect.'

This has forced the question: what information is considered relevant for developing an understanding of the past? By shedding modern biases and scientific reductionism, testimonies and traditions from the past can be critically assessed with an appreciation for antiquity. Embracing ancient testimonies is not an invitation to naivety though; historians who are discerning of the sources, conscious of ideologies and cultures of the ancient world, will embolden and renew an era of flourishing historical study.

2.4.2   Historiography and biblical history

Though communicating theology is one of the primary intentions of the Old Testament, the biblical writers were intrinsically concerned with history and geography. The content and context of each event is central to understanding the message of the writer. As Long (1994:167) observes, 'biblical literature tends to exhibit three basic impulses: theological (or ideological), historical (or referential), and literary (or aesthetic).' These three impulses are almost always present, to widely varying degrees, in every biblical narrative. The biblical writers were intentionally rhetorical, producing a history that the Israelites were meant to embrace as the basis for their morality and daily ethos, both individually and collectively. The tradition of the exodus from Egypt was in fact the greatest redemptive act of God in the Old Testament, a deliverance that was foundational to their trust in God's power and love. As ancient texts are often deeply colored and infused with ideology, so too, the exodus account possesses its own ideological intentionality. As for its measure of historical actuality, this is difficult to assess.

66

Modern interpreters are often quick to reject the historicity of narrative texts that include descriptions of divine interventions in the form of miracles—a suspension of natural laws. In each case, something significant or unusual happened and was ascribed by the narrator as having divine causation. This is not particular to the Hebrew Bible; the same types of events are contained in narrative descriptions in virtually all texts of ancient near eastern people. However, this does not discount the possibility that the event(s) truly occurred, in some fashion, with the causation left in question.

> ….historical narration often implicitly or explicitly alludes to large supra-empirical entities which are suppose to guarantee the coherence of apparently heterogeneous events on the surface of history—Zeus, Fate, Destiny, the Idea, Progress or the Class Struggle, for example. The historiographical status of texts that express a belief in one or other of these universal ordering principles may be accepted even by those who do not share this particular belief. There is therefore no reason to deny historiographical status to the narrative of Yahweh's dealings with Israel.

> (Watson 1997:43)

The ancient Israelites not only accepted the miracle stories that are interwoven into their historical narratives but trusted the material as fundamental to their self-understanding and identity as a nation. In the Hebrew Bible the narrative material is a linear record that interlaces history and religious ideology. 'Israel's history cannot be fully comprehended without knowledge of her faith, nor can her faith be understood without a realistic portrayal of her history' (Millard 1994:64). The thorny task of unraveling the admixture of religious content (miraculous events and subjective faith experience) from the historical import of the text leaves some scholars questioning if what is left of the historical remains is trustworthy.

Though still contentious, there is some consensus in Old Testament scholarship that the redactors of the Hebrew Bible were working to complete the final form of the

67

Old Testament between the 8th and 3rd centuries, and therefore, materials written before

this time were either passed down in an oral or piecemeal written form. This means for

the Pentateuch, that the redactors were working with traditions that occurred many

centuries before them and they could not possibly have critical insight into the history of

Israel. Dever places the compilation of the Tetrateuch in the 8th or 7th century B.C.

because archaeologists have shown 'that literacy was not widespread in ancient Israel

until the 8th century B.C. at the earliest' (Dever 2003:8). However, as early as the 11th

century B.C. there is evidence of an early Canaanite/Hebrew script being practiced on an

ostracon at Izbet Sartah ascribed to be the Israelite site of Ebenezer by Dever (Hess

2002:86). This abecedary suggests that the alphabet was being practiced by an Israelite

who was learning to read and write—a sign of literacy under development. Furthermore,

Hess (2002:95) summarizes the data and concludes that writing occurs in every century

of the Iron Age and is not restricted to any class of persons, or any specific location or

locations in Israel and Judah. Nonetheless, it is still seems evident that the final redactors

of the Old Testament and most prominently, the Tetrateuch were drawing from either

much earlier oral tradition, or written sources, or both. Does this exclude the Tetrateuch

as a source of valid history? While minimalists tend to answer this negatively, many

historians have strongly, yet critically, accepted testimonies written centuries after the

events they recount. For example:

> The Homeric epics, composed five centuries after the Mycenaean era they
> describe, can be shown to have preserved numerous memories of the Late
> Bronze age, in the personal and place names and in artifacts mentioned.
> Roman historians use Livy to reconstruct the history of the Roman
> Republic several centuries before his lifetime. Classical historians use
> Plutarch (second century A.D.) for the history of Themistocles (fifth
> century B.C.), and all historians of Alexander the Great (fourth century

B.C.) acknowledge as their most accurate source Arrian's *Anabasis* (second century A.D).

Rather than take a skeptical reductionist approach, historians embrace potentially viable sources of history and critically assess their potential contribution as opposed to discounting any later accounts of events. This same fair but critical approach should be ascribed by biblical historians in the case of the Old Testament.

Historians cannot avoid using testimonies from the past as evidence for reconstructing history. As archaeologists must rely on work done by previous generations to make interpretations in the present, so to historians must critically rely on verbal and written testimonies about the past. Most of our knowledge of the past comes from testimony, and commonly, it is testimony that is biased by a point of view or ideology, and is its own interpretation of the past. This is completely unavoidable for the historian and should not lead us to a wholesale distrust of testimony or tradition.

> Testimony….is central to our quest to know the past; and therefore *interpretation* is unavoidable as well. All testimony about the past is also interpretation about the past. It has its ideology or theology; it has its presuppositions and its point of view; it has its narrative structure; and (if at all interesting to read or listen to) it has its narrative art, its rhetoric. We cannot avoid testimony, and we cannot avoid interpretation.

While advocating openness to the prospect of historical viability in the book of Numbers; it is not an invitation to naivety. Certainly, with all ancient narrative accounts there will be culturally biased records of the past, propagandizing, politicizing, generalizations, restricted points of view, but experienced historians can acknowledge these idiosyncrasies yet can still garner insights into the past.

2.4.3 Historiography and narrative criticism

A new interest in literary studies and an appreciation for synchronic study has detracted

from a commitment to the historicity of the biblical text (Long 1994:161). Addressing

the situation in New Testament studies, Francis Watson (1997:34) laments this tendency

of narrative critics: 'It is assumed that history and narrative most go their separate ways:

for those with historical interests, various historical-critical strategies are available, while

for those with a more literary orientation, ahistorical literary-critical analysis is a fruitful

possibility.' However, this is not necessarily the case by default. In fact, to discount the

historical factor in literary analysis, contrary to the intentional historical moorings of the

biblical text would be unnatural to the aim of the author. Sternberg has never envisioned

a bifurcation between biblical narratives and history:

> Herein lies one of the Bible's unique rules: under the aegis of ideology,
> convention transmutes even invention into the stuff of history, or rather
> obliterates the line dividing fact from fancy in communication. So every
> word is God's word. The product is neither fiction nor historicized fiction
> nor fictionalized history, but historiography pure and uncompromising.

(Sternberg 1985:34-35)

Alter employs the idea of 'historicized prose fiction' as an interpretive grid for biblical

narrative and he assumes the biblical text contains a historical component that the artistic

biblical compilers, who drew from unknown sources around 1000 B.C., were in some

manner true to the historical traditions passed on to them (Alter 1981:24). While some

narrative critics may choose to discount the historical features and veracity of biblical

narratives, it is not necessary from a philosophical perspective—and tangentially such an

assumption tends to sever the narrative critic from access to ancient Near East

comparative literature, as well as a century of scholarship that pursued diachronic connections.

As maintained in the preceding pages, it remains quite plausible that a group of early Israelites traversed the wilderness between Egypt and Canaan, and while in transit experienced internal disputes and rebellion. However, the storyline in Numbers 16 and 17 maybe historically controvertible due to its 'miraculous' and ideological content, the narrative is worthy of careful study due to its message which was meant to communicate and affect every subsequent generation of the Israelites. Further, it is highly unlikely that any future material remains discovered by archaeologists or historians will provide any clarity regarding the specific details within the storyline of Numbers 16 and 17 and this will remain controvertible. Therefore, narrative critics delve into the interpretive operation where historians tend to cease.

2.5   Conclusion

While it is clear that biblical archaeology has not produced the evidentiary storehouse of artifacts that was hoped to substantiate the veracity of every aspect of Israel's history; there have been significant discoveries corroborating Israel's existence and position in the ancient world, particularly unfolding since Iron II. Few archaeologists would contend against the historical validity of Israel's existence and general storyline of the Old Testament moving backwards from the Persian period to the divided kingdom of the 8th century B.C.—mostly because of conformational extra-biblical evidence. Nonetheless, the archeological evidence for Israel's origins prior to the first millennium B.C. remains slim, obscure and controversial. Nevertheless, because the archaeological evidence is so

71

sparse does not mean that the historical value of the biblical tradition should be discounted outright, either because of modern bias or philosophical objections.

Modern archaeology has diversified and specialized as a science, but also grown more prolific in proposing and advocating alternate theories of Israel's early history. Archaeology's findings need to be considered as working hypotheses as the field continues to be complicated, requiring considerable interpretation, and interaction with other disciplines including biblical studies. 'One must avoid the common pitfall of thinking that the available data comprise a comprehensive picture, for any of the periods or phases of antiquity. Every year, as new data come to light, it is necessary to accommodate them within the parameters of previous understanding. But there will always be gaps' (Rainey 2001:141). Though archaeology remains an important contributor to historians, its hypotheses should not be so quickly ensconced, but held tenuously and tested over time as more evidence is gathered and synthesized with other disciplines.

Scholars tend to agree that biblical studies and archaeology needs to function in a symbiotic and integrative manner (Merrill 1995:145), but it is not so much method that inhibits this type of collaborative work, but the disagreement over presuppositions about the value of the biblical text as a historical witness. Presuppositions from the modern sciences have affected the field of history and archaeology reducing and, with some, eliminating the worth of the Old Testament as a plausible source for historical data. A more expansive view of historiography and a willingness to recognize the contribution of ancient testimonies is the most promising and judicious way forward.

While the Hebrew Bible is replete with historical and geographical data, the book of Numbers itself lacks contact with other nations or corroborative events, yet it is placed in a plausible temporal and spatial frame—between Egypt and Canaan. To discount the possibility of this migration from ever happening—particularly in this case because of the very limited sampling of archaeological data as compared to the potential whole sample—is a frail argument from silence. Addressing Egypt and the exodus, Sarna states:

> There is nothing, including the results of archaeological research, that can be described as constituting clear-cut and objective evidence for the historicity of the biblical narrative. All this, on the other hand, is an argument from silence, and the lack of concrete confirmation of the scriptural account cannot be adduced to undermine its veracity. The cumulate effect of several varied lines of approach tend to support the historicity of the slavery in Egypt, the reality of the migration from that country and the actuality of the subsequent Israelite penetration and control of much of Canaan.

(Sarna 1988:51)

As the exact nature of Israel's origins remain clouded, this study will modestly treat the biblical testimony to the wilderness sojourn as historically viable, according to the level of historicity that the author was intending, and also recognizing the ideological and rhetorical purposes of the text. Maintaining some historical contact with this epoch allows narrative critics to make use of the vast and enriching background research completed by linguists, biblical scholars, and archaeologists as the foundation for narrative analysis—an analysis that is true to the historical and cultural features of the Late Bronze period (using Merneptah's stele as a temporal sign post). This study follows Smith in concluding: 'In short, the exodus seems to belong to Israel's earliest traditions, and its historicity in some form cannot be rejected or assumed to be false at the outset'

(Smith 2004:20). From this assertion, some form of sojourn in the wilderness becomes evident, but the events of that sojourn, unsubstantiated in the archaeological record are only accessible through the book of Numbers. A narrative critical analysis of Numbers seeks to focus on the content and message of the narrative considering the strategies found in the Hebrew text—in its context of the ancient world. And even if the historical viability of the account is rejected, 'its abiding value as a witness to the developing consciousness of Israel as a community of faith during the first millennium BC cannot be denied' (Davies 1995:ixx). Notwithstanding, to discern the degree to which later redactors adjusted the specifics of the narrative remains inscrutable. Thus, apart from historical interests, this narrative analysis will also appeal to tradition critics concerned with the ideological evolution of Israel's belief system.

3   THE LITERARY SETTING FOR NUMBERS 16 AND 17

Before engaging in a narrative critical examination of this passage, it is necessary to

review the benchmarks established by previous scholars working with the book of

Numbers. For this chapter, the academic context and progress on two fronts need to be

appraised and synthesized so that a foundation can be established as the overall basis for

a narrative critical analysis. Specific to the study of Numbers 16 and 17 are the matters

of: (1) the outline and structural patterning of the book, and (2) the source critical

considerations about the development and redacting of this text. As structural patterns

provide important clues for the demarcation of this study on the macro level, there are

smaller units that shall be discussed as they become relevant. Ultimately, an examination

of these two topics will both inaugurate a more informed narrative critical study of

Korah's rebellion, and more so, will highlight the centrality and distinctiveness of this

rebellion narrative in the book of Numbers.

3.1   The outline and literary structure of the book of Numbers

Demonstrating an overarching outline and structure for the book of Numbers continues to

be a conundrum. This quandary is exhibited in Dentan's opening remark on the topic:

'Since the book has no real unity and was not composed in accordance with any logical,

predetermined plan, whatever outline may be imposed upon it will have to be recognized

as largely subjective and arbitrary' (Dentan 1962:567). More recently, Sherwood

(2002:110) expressed his vexation with the uncertainty of the structure of Numbers:

'Apart from an outline of the book, I have not found any proposed structure of the book

convincing.' Over the past centuries, a geographical model with many small variations

has become the traditional and accepted outline postulated in the literature. Nevertheless, in recent decades several new approaches have been advocated which add richly to the current study of Numbers. The traditional and newer models will be evaluated, considering their respective strengths and weaknesses, especially noting the formative contributions of Dennis Olson, Jacob Milgrom, Mary Douglas, and Dennis Cole.

Interestingly, many source critics did not find it necessary to propose an outline of Numbers, nor so much, other books of the Tetrateuch (i.e. Driver 1892:55; Eissfeldt 1965:208). Documentarians tended to concentrate on the composition of the Tetrateuch—particularly the identity and interrelationship of the strands, and their supplementation. The assumption of this type of literary criticism was that diachronic investigation was more telling than synchronic reading, with a historical impulse their efforts attempted to uncover the origins and *Sitz im Leben* of the text. That source critics would not have a compulsion to uncover a unifying outline to the book is cogent with their assumption that the Tetrateuch is a composite with multiple strands.

One apparent obstacle to delineating a clear outline for the book is its obvious diversity of genres. Milgrom (1989:xiii) finds that remarkably Numbers employs more generic variety than any other book of the bible, including: narrative, poetry, prophecy, victory song, prayer, blessing, lampoon, diplomatic letter, civil law, cultic law, oracular decision, census list, temple archive, and itinerary. This conglomeration of literary genres tends to obscure the junctions and disjunctions so needed when trying to divide the text into units. Consequently, more attention needs to be given to content, themes, and associative terms.

Also, the dilemma of the historical truthfulness and compositional ordering of the genres or strands have contributed to the confusion over structure. Dentan (1962:569) questions the veracity of the stories in Numbers stating: 'the narrative of Numbers is in many places used simply as an artificial setting for the publication of certain laws, both civil and religious, often introduced without regard for suitability of context.' Though pessimistic in its mood, this assertion may very well provide an intentional motive for the writer/redactors. Levine (1993:72) likewise, finds Numbers to be the 'most loosely organized of all the Torah books' and consequently examines the source-critical compilation of the priestly and non-priestly materials as more instructive for literary analysis. Childs (1979:195) finds the temporal and geographical markers in the book of Numbers too inconspicuous for the macro structure for the book. Further, he expects that the ancients were not as overtly concerned with structure. For narrative critics, the organizing structure of a narrative establishes parameters for literary units, and at times, these structural features become a factor for consideration in the broader interpretive scheme.

Another mitigating factor in determining the outline of Numbers is associated with the controvertible relationship of Numbers to the books around it, particularly Exodus and Deuteronomy. Some find that Numbers, particularly Numbers 1:1 to 10:10, supplies a conclusion, or acts as an appendix, to Exodus and Leviticus (i.e. Gray 1903:xxiv, Noth 1968:11, 12; Wenham 1981:15, 16). However, treating the first major section of Numbers as a continuation of earlier works bids against establishing the book's own unity and literary structure. Likewise, one's paradigm for the end of Numbers is affected by whether one views Numbers as a conclusion to the Tetrateuch, or is

considered part of the larger division of the Pentateuch or Hexateuch. A synthesis of the contending views will contribute to a determination of the literary location of Korah's rebellion within the framework of Numbers.

3.1.1 The geographical outline

The traditional outline follows the major geographical movements of the community in the wilderness. Carpenter (1986:561) correctly notes the book as 'permeated by a sense of movement.' The strength of this model is that it divides the book into three almost equally sized units: Sinai (Nm 1:1-10:10), Kadesh-barnea (Nm 10:11-20:21), and finally, the plains of Moab (Nm 20:22-36:13) and positions the rebellion narratives squarely in the middle section of the book. Positively, the geographical outline is attuned to the impinging notations of land locations and journey footnotes found in the narratorial additions that pervade the book. The travel itinerary in the wilderness was obviously a preoccupation of the writer(s) and subsequent redactors of the book, as there is a surplus of spatial details. However, the problem of this three part geographical structure is exemplified by Wolf (1991:189) who treats the concluding eleven chapters of Numbers as an appendix dealing with matters that 'would affect life in the Promised Land', a distinction that is thematically too vague and fails to reflect the literary framing provided by the narratives concerning Zelophehad's daughters (Nm 27 and 36). Also problematic with the geographical structure is the ambiguous ending of the second station and the beginning of the third. Olson (1985:35) surveyed 33 commentators who based their outlines on the geographical notations and found there were 18 different proposals for this specific division. Though not widely divergent, this lack of decisiveness exemplifies

why the geographical outline is not compelling. The final problem is the incongruity between the narrated time (amount of time described in the text) and the narrative time (the amount of space used to describe a time period). While the narrative time is relatively equal among the three sections, the narrated time is greatly disproportionate with Numbers 1-10:10 covering twenty days (cf. Nm 1:1 and Nm 10:11), Numbers 10:11-20:21 approximately 38 years, and Numbers 20:22-36:13 approximately five months (cf. Nm 33:38 and Dt 1:3). Commentators have tended to follow the geographical outline, mostly by default, while at the same time pointing to the lack of cogency inherent with all the options proposed (i.e. Ashley 1993:3). Gray, in this manner, follows the geographical outline but feels that Numbers has been extracted from its larger narrative context. 'The first section of the book is closely related to Exodus and Leviticus, so the latter part of the last section is, though far less closely, related to Deuteronomy' (Gray 1903:xxiv). Adding to the convolution, Dozeman (1998:3-4) gives strong support to Olson's two part generational model, but then defaults to the geographical model in his own analysis. Similarly, Knierim (1995:382-385) adheres to a bipartite arrangement adopting the macro geographical indicators as the highest level of structure, dividing Numbers at Sinai, (Nm 1:1 to 10:10, and Nm 10:11 to Nm 36:13).

A variation to the geographical model is espoused heartily by Budd (1984:xvii) who divides the book into three major sections, though his demarcations do not follow the traditional divisions: Constituting the community at Sinai (Nm 1:1-9:14), The journey—its setbacks and success (Nm 9:15-25:18), and Final preparations for settlement (Nm 26:1-35:34). Budd oddly considers Number 36 as an appendix to the book, then later adjoins it to the last section of his outline, again illustrating the structural imbroglio.

The conundrum presented by the book's lack of a conspicuous framework is further expressed by Martin Noth (1968:1) who, by default, follows the traditional geographical outline but states: 'the book lacks unity, and it is difficult to see any pattern in its construction.' Noth feels the disunity of the book makes it self-evident that Numbers has a lengthy and complicated history of origins. And while the varied and fractured nature of the contents may lead to a fragment theory, he continues to uphold traditional source critical divisions, with his own assertions (Noth 1968:2-11).

While Gordon Wenham surveys several outlines that have been postulated, he focuses on a triadic form as a literary devise, but not emphasizing the three stations in Numbers (Sinai, Kadesh, and Moab) but the journeys preceding them. Wenham (1981:16, 17) observes the parallel narratives and themes found in these journeys which bridge Exodus to Numbers: *en route* to Sinai (Ex 13-19), *en route* to Kadesh (Nm 10-13), *en route* to Moab (Nm 20-22). That many scholars have noted the story of God providing water from a rock in Exodus 17:1-7 and a similar narrative recounting Moses' failure in Numbers 20:2-13 is only one example supporting Wenham's schema. Following a tradition-historical perspective, Wenham sees these three cycles as patterned after the cycles in Genesis (primeval history, the Abraham cycle, the Jacob cycle, and the Joseph cycle) which, according to Olson (1985:28), allows Wenham to avoid many of the source critical matters. Wenham notes several repetitive features found in each of these units, yet they are rather sundry events, related to what a reader might expect (i.e. songs, divine promises, complaining, plagues, intercession, sacrifices, etc). But of this arrangement Wenham states: 'By definition it overlooks the differences between the three journeys, and between the three cycles, which are exegetically at least as important as the

80

similarities. The reader is expected to compare and contrast the nation's behavior on the different occasions' (Wenham 1981:16).

3.1.2   The generational outline

Dennis Olson (1996:5-7) has promoted a novel outline based on a division of Numbers into approximate halves—both halves are inaugurated with a census—with the first half devoted to the old generation of rebellion (Nm 1-25) and the second half recounting the new generation of hope (Nm 26-36). The advantage of this arrangement is that it takes seriously the significance of the census accounts which are stylistically prominent in the book, as they create an anticipation of hope for each generation whose names are prestigiously documented. However, the thematic links that Olson presents between the two halves are not as convincing, sharing the same difficulties with those who have attempted to make the thematic connection in the alternation model. The analogy between the two generations is surely implicit in the contents of the book, yet until the book of Deuteronomy, the text does not lucidly make such a contrast. The merit of this model is the treatment of the second half of the book, beginning with a census and then incorporating an *inclusio* using the petition of Zelophehad's daughters in Numbers 27 and 36. Overall, this model has merit and should be considered at least as a thematic element of the book, though perhaps not sufficiently compelling to become the accepted macro outline.

Tullock and McEntire (2006:89) follow Olsen in accepting that the two censuses create a parallel structure: chapters 1-25 and chapters 26-36, both sections being inaugurated by a census. They also note the alternation between law and narrative and

state: 'A careful survey of its structure, however, reveals that these components [independent stories, traditions and documents] have not simply been thrown together, but have been artistically woven together into a literary work which has a sense of unity and purpose surpassing the sum of its parts.' Likewise, Tullock and McEntire (2006:93) have difficulty with Numbers 26-36 and entitle their summary 'Miscellaneous Materials'. Olson's model has found some favor amongst scholars and if not accepted, it is referenced, at minimum. Olson has brought to the fore a renewed appreciation for the literary importance of the two censuses and the thematic weightiness of the contrast between the two generations.

3.1.3   The alternation outline

The alternation between narrative and law is a conspicuous feature of Numbers that has been explored and expanded in recent decades. Jacob Milgrom (1992:1146-1148) in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, which follows closely the introduction in his Numbers commentary, examines the literary structure of Numbers under four headings, acknowledging the problem of identifying a macro structure and consequent levels of importance. As for 'Subdivisions', Milgrom first notes the threefold geographical outline followed by the temporal bifurcation into two generations, as per Olson. Then Milgrom proceeds to the category of 'Cohesion' and chronicles the features which tend to unify the book. Turning to the 'Alternation of Law and Narrative' Milgrom traces the sequences and concludes that: 'The admixture of these two genres is of no surprise for anyone conversant with the ANE vassal treaties which open with a recounting of the suzerain's beneficial actions to his vassal (narrative), followed by the stipulations imposed upon the

vassal (law).' The connection Milgrom asserts between ancient near East suzerain vassal treaties and Numbers is warranted in only a limited way, as Numbers continues the narrative and law pattern at least five times, by his own count, and the tone and content of the treaties, in particular, are considerably different then the sagas of Numbers. Therefore, in my view, Numbers diverges, perhaps building upon the ANE pattern, and expands upon the minimal but similar pattern in Exodus of alternating law and narrative as well as including such variety of genres. Milgrom concludes by exploring 'Structures' and points out the considerable usage of chiasm and introversion, and secondarily: parallels, inclusions, subscripts, repetitive resumptions, prolepsis, and septenary enumerations, though helpful in accessing divisions, these structures do not provide a final structural outline. Specific to Numbers 16, Milgrom (1989:xxvi) proposes an interesting inversion for the penultimate recension incorporating an ABCC'B'A' pattern, but the ultimate recension is less synthetic. Milgrom (1989:417) asserts that these last two layers of the text can be deduced by the removal of problematic portions of the text, but he feels that discerning the shape of the text prior to these two is dubious. His source critical assumptions that meet in his analysis of the structure will be examined carefully below. Milgrom inaugurated an approach to Numbers which is far more sensitive to the alternation pattern, as well as other structures, which insinuates that the patterning is an intentional and beneficial literary feature of the book rather than an obstacle to its unity.

An engaging work in recent years was published by Mary Douglas, *In the wilderness: The doctrine of defilement in the book of Numbers*, which builds on the work of Milgrom and squarely engages the genre and structure of Numbers. Douglas (1993:83) maintains that the text of Numbers is not a disjointed text but was 'very

carefully constructed and that the many repetitions and jumps of context are not accidental.' She proposes that, Numbers, being composed or redacted in the 5th century, would have benefited from the most eloquent literary forms and qualities (including repetition and alternation) of that era, the quality of which is largely underestimated (Douglas 1993:90). Ogden (1996:420) follows Douglas and highlights the feature of repetition as a demonstration of the author's 'deep concern for order and precision, for systematic presentation and form.' Douglas notes that the diversity of forms in Numbers affirms and provides samples of the previous forms found in the other books of the Tetrateuch. As Genesis is narrative and promise, Exodus is a mixture of narrative and law, Leviticus is predominately law, then Numbers climaxes the Tetrateuch with an admixture of all the forms. The purpose of the alternation is not like montage or flash-back, but intended 'to enrich the chronological dimension' (Douglas 1993:102). According to Douglas, the content of Numbers forms an inverted parallel (or introversion) with Genesis (Douglas 1993:101). While clearly there are themes developed, such as the later relationship between the Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites; yet, her proposal of inverted parallelism is less convincing because of the breadth of the titles, and the arbitrary selection of materials.

Douglas makes an intriguing argument connecting the cyclical festival schedule, derived from the sacrificial requirements of Numbers 28 and 29, and the Jewish lunar calendar with the outline of Numbers around the thirteen sections of the book (Douglas 1993:114). Douglas (1993:107) acknowledges that the data in Numbers does not perfectly accord with her model, specifically with the narrative describing the Sabbath breaking wood-gatherer (Nm 15:32-36) that impinges on a larger law section—a

noteworthy section because it is the only narrative in the rebellion section (Nm 10:10 to Nm 25), where the community obeyed a specific command of the Lord (Nm 15:36) (וַיָּמֹת כַּאֲשֶׁר רֹצָה הֹ יְהֹוָה הֹ אֶת־מֹשֶׁה). Although there are other lesser incongruities which are not prohibitive to her schema (Nm 8:1-4; 29:40), Numbers 36 also causes an overlap in her cycle. If these two narrative sections are counted, the total is fifteen, and thirteen are needed to conform to the ring pattern. While the pattern with thirteen units is slightly forced, the fifteen unit pattern is still congruent, but it has to be disassociated with the calendar months and festival schedule.

Furthermore, while there is some affinity between the parallel rungs of the pattern, a closer examination of the elements are marked by ambiguity and superficial associations. For example, Douglas connects the law of Numbers 5 and 6 (dealing with purity in the camp, payment of restitution, the test for the suspected adulteress, and the Nazirite vow) with Numbers 33:50 to 35:34 (which discusses war policy during the conquest, land boundaries and tribal leaders, levitical cities and cities of refuge, manslaughter and justice) under the title 'Keeping Faith' (Douglas 1993:118). While these are both law sections, their contents is so varied, it belies their association. Also, under the heading 'Holy Times,' Numbers 10:1-10 (the use of two trumpets for signaling the community to gather, rally for war, and herald the feasts) is associated to Numbers 28 to 30 (offerings and feasts), with such a meager link between the use of the trumpet, making the connection suspect. The study is an innovative endeavor, though her connections are slightly forced (cf. Sherwood 2002:110), Douglas has advanced our appreciation for the alternating themes and their potential relationship to the whole of the book.

85

While there is some connection between elements in the first half of the book and the second, it seems better to view these in terms of Olson's division between the first generation and the second. There are some thematic reinstitutions (repetitions) in the second half of the book as necessary to remind or reaffirm the cultic requirements to the second generation.

3.1.4   The cyclical outline

An impressive outline has been proposed by Cole (2000:38-52) which gives some credence to Olson's work, and that presents a new paradigm of cycles composing a three part outline each with cycles within, creating a 2-3-2 pattern. A truncated version of the outline is as follows:

I.   Faithfulness of Israel at Sinai (1:1-10:10)
        1.   Sinai Cycle A: Census and Consecration (1:1-6:27)
        2.   Sinai Cycle B: Tabernacle and Celebration (7:1-10:10)
II.   The Rebellious Generation in the Wilderness (10:11-25:19)
        1.   Rebellion Cycle A: From Sinai to Zin—Decline of the Old Generation
                (10:11-15:41)
        2.   Rebellion Cycle B: Korah and Company Challenge Moses (16:1-19:22)
        3.   Rebellion Cycle C: From Zin to Moab: The Rebellion and Replacement
                of Moses (20:1-25:19)
III.   Challenges for the New Generation in the Land (26:1-36:13)
        1.   Advent Cycle A: The End of the Old Generation and the Birth of the New
                Generation (26:1-30:16)
        2.   Advent Cycle B: Preparation for War and Entry into the Promised Land
                (31:1-36:13)

Cole (2000:38) established his outline using six different criteria for structural analysis: (1) grammatical indicators, particularly introductory obligatory formulas; (2) thematic repetition and patterns; (3) convergent and divergent themes, such as chiastic structures; (4) mnemonic devises; (5) rhetorical devices; and (6) variations in

grammatical forms. Cole explicates the formulaic value of his outline in relationship to the canon contending that:

> The three stages of faithfulness (2 cycles), rebellion (3 cycles), and resolution (2 cycles) forecast the remaining history of the nation in its cyclical pattern of devotion, rejection and renewal found in the Former Prophets. Hence the Deuteronomic pattern provides an overarching umbrella to the entire book.
>
> (Cole 2000:43)

Further, Cole's outline garners support in its approximation to the geographical model, though his model has a decisive ending to the second section and beginning of the third that suitably conforms to Olson's formula.

Most recently, Won Lee studied the structure of Numbers using a 'conceptual analysis' which assembles information from the text's linguistic-semantic aspects, drawing indicators from both the surface and subsurface of the text (Lee 2003:47). His study is focused on the structure of Numbers and divides the book into units describing his criteria for boundaries noting 'compositional devices, such as linguistic, stylistic, rhetorical, formal, generic, and thematic signals, but also conceptualities under the text' (Lee 2003:120). In his demarcation of Numbers he has separated Numbers 16 from 17, breaking down Numbers 10:11 to 36:13 into 36 units (Lee 2003:121). The division of these two chapters is not the best option on several grounds beginning with the incongruence with the structural feature of alternation between law and narrative advocated by Milgrom. Further, while the plot type (see chapter 6 of this study) of Numbers 16 (conflict resolution) and Numbers 17 (revelatory) are distinctive, the major conceptual theme of both remains the authentication of Aaron's priesthood. Also, the narrative genre is very similar, and the narrative section is bracketed by more decisive legal sections which create much stronger and clearer markers for demarcation (Nm 15

and 18). While there may be some reasons to separate these units, considering the work of Douglas, there is stronger evidence to keep the two chapters together for the purposes of a narrative analysis.

3.1.5   A synthesis of views on the structure of Numbers

While the geographical model carries the weight of tradition, mostly because of its simplicity, dividing the book into three almost equal parts, it fails in bridging structural elements to the contents and theology of the book. Divisions usually indicate a change of direction, theme or emphasis. The geographical outline only marks the spatial travels of the nation, and can account little for the literary shaping and contours of this multi-genre and multi-patterned book. For example, in the geographical model, the contents of Numbers 1:1-10:11 could be vaguely characterized as organization and instruction, and the second section could be comfortably described as multileveled rebellion. But even if the second section ends as late as Numbers 22:1, then there is still a massive rebellion carrying over into the third section in Numbers 25. While geography and travel is a substantial theme in the book, it does not satisfy the need for an outline that befits the many literary structures, the content and or the rich theology of the book as a unity.

If one engages more of the thematic and conceptual elements than the chronology of the book, Olson's generational model accords greater affinity to the character of the book—the failure of the first rebellious generation, and the hopefulness in the new generation. Olson's work has been an important advancement in the study of Numbers and was perhaps the ground breaker that allowed for further critique of the traditional

geographical model. Other advancements were made in the work of Milgrom, Douglas, and Cole, but Olson's emphasis on the two censuses makes a lasting contribution.

Augmenting Milgrom's observations on the alternation between law and narrative, Douglas formulated a schema that accounted for the alternation in a ring pattern with corresponding materials in each half. While the model aimed to account for the alternation and make broader connections, the conceptual data in the text just does not conform persuasively to the entirety of her proposed outline.

Cole acknowledges the geographical model but intentionally seeks to expand the work of Olson. The advantage of Cole's model is that it is sensitive to several factors: (1) the general travel motif and geographical model, at least tangentially, (2) the census of the two generations, an unmistakable theme, (3) the deuteronomic and cyclical influence on the outline of the book, and (4) the alternation of law and narrative as signaling demarcations.

Both Cole's cyclical outline and Douglas' ring pattern place Korah's rebellion as the common center point in their configurations. While Cole's model is unintentionally sensitive to the geographical movements of the community, it highlights the cycles found within the drama of the narratives.   The pattern of these cycles accentuates Korah's rebellion story as the epicenter and focal point of the book, following the Hebrew preference for center stress exemplified by the common use of symmetrical structures (Avishur 1999:20). Not only does the outline of the book accentuate this narrative, source critical conclusions demonstrate the intentional crafting and redacting of the rebellion narrative to have received great attention, with high hopes for its dramatic effect upon its readership.

3.2   An appraisal of source critical application to Numbers 16 and 17

Though source criticism currently lacks uniformity, the traditional views held since

Wellhausen posited J as the earliest strand (c. 840 B.C.) followed by E written about a

century later (c. 700 B.C.). Subsequently these two strands were redacted together (R^JE)

but before D was composed in the time of Josiah. As D seemed not to possess

knowledge of P, D was added to JE prior to P. Sometime during the 5th century P was

added to JED. As Wellhausen (1957:1-13) focused on the main sources, he expected that

ongoing modifications were made by redactors, making the composition of the

Tetrateuch a complicated process (Alexander 2002:15, 16). The entire compositional

progression is well summarized by Rofé that:

> …the composition of the Pentateuch appears to have been a lengthy and
> complex process, lasting from the days of the Judges until the end of the
> Persian period—in other words, from the twelfth century until the fourth
> century BCE, a period of approximately eight hundred years. This
> process included all the stages of composition—initial oral transmission,
> commitment of individual stories to writing, composition of cycles of
> stories and collections of laws, compilation of these compositions as
> they underwent editing, and finally the addition of new, late-originated,
> works to the existing platform.

(Rofé 1999:130)

With Numbers, modern source critics, particularly Gray and Levine, envision that

the JE strand was being compiled between the ninth and tenth century B.C. and was

composed with the etiological purpose of providing a prehistory for the nation, both

historical and theological, to establish a divine endorsement for their possession of the

land, and to sanction Israel's political policies regarding her neighbors: Edomites,

Midianites, Canaanites, and Amalakites (Cole 2000:31). Numerous challenges to the

documentary hypothesis have been made by Old Testament scholars of varying commitments, but it is not necessary to track these skirmishes here, but rather to glean the common assumptions that will be presumed for a narrative critical analysis. Controversy surrounding the priestly source comes to the forefront in this particular examination of Numbers 16 and 17, and as the schematic difficulties that apply to JE and D have lesser bearing, these will be scrutinized first.

3.2.1   The D source in Numbers

It seems most prudent to expedite the role of the deuteronomist as, according to many source critics, this school played a minimal part in the direct production of the Exodus to Numbers, and no part in Numbers 16 and 17 (Levine 1993;405). Few critics identify the D source within the book of Numbers. Weinfeld (1972:9) is not determined to dissect the text into sources so much as to espouse the permeating influence of D on the Old Testament (though making no specific claims concerning Korah's rebellion) by recounting the evidence of D's influence on literary forms, ideology, and didactic aims. Weinfeld (1972:9) believes 'that deuteronomic composition is the creation of scribal circles which began their literary project some time prior to the reign of Josiah and were still at work after the fall of Judah.' Further, that the D school was at work contemporaneously to the P school and tended to appropriate and redact P materials (:180). Both H. H. Schmid and Rolf Rendtorff (1977:99) have also argued that the Tetrateuch was impinged by deuteronomic or deuteronomistic thinking, suggesting that D was the final editor of the Pentateuch, contrary to the long established priority of P

(Alexander 2002:49). However, even if D were last, it seems evident that much of the content of P, relating to cultic institutions, was not tampered with in any significant way.

Certainly, some divergence in ideology does exist between D and JE as Levine (1993:100) highlights that contrary to JE, the deuteronomist supports Israel's possession of the land, but is more generous in its view of people groups related to Israel: Esau (Edomites), and Lot (Moabites and Ammonites). While it remains difficult to discriminate specific D passages within the Tetrateuch, it appears that the D school made some later revision(s), though probably not the final (see discussion on P). If D, in fact, completed the final redaction of the Pentateuch, it does not appear that the cultic concerns of P were markedly disturbed, as these cultic institutions and controversies remain in abundance.

3.2.3   The J and E sources in Numbers

The date and nature of the J and E sources continues to be disputed. Prior to Wellhausen, E was felt to be the earliest source, but Wellhausen's view that J was the earliest was widely accepted and dominated the field for over a century. Wellhausen felt that J and E were combined by a redactor (R^{JE}) deemed the Jehovist who reworked the sources such that it is too difficult or speculative to dissect these sources, henceforth many source critics refer to the combined sigla JE finding the meticulous separation of the J and E sources to be conjectural and impractical (Nicholson 1998:11-13; Budd 1984:xxii; Levine 1993:48). Classical source critics viewed JE as the earliest of sources, being pre-exilic or earlier, primarily narrative in genre and concerned mostly with historical material. Related to JE in Numbers, Budd (1984:xxiii) states: 'There must obviously have been

some point at which this material was forged into a pre-settlement "history" of Israel, a compendium of traditional material and the author's own contributions. It seems reasonable to describe this author/editor as "the Yahwist," and his work as JE, if only to indicate the dominant components in its varied background.'

A recent movement lead by John van Seters and Hans Schmid has suggested that the J document was written during the exile or later, though subsequent work by Erhard Blum and Christoph Levin has tended to see J as the work of redactors during the exile— who made use of *written sources that were pre-exilic* in origin (Nicholson 1998:132-195). While an authoritative view regarding the dating of J or its conjunction with E, the classical configuration and ordering of JEDP will be generally accepted. Likewise, the fractional nature of Numbers 16 and 17 will be assumed—and the overall conclusion that the narrative is a composite.

Fortunately, separating JE material from the broader text of Numbers is made easier by the genre divisions which are rather distinct, with little blending of strands (save for examples in Nm 13, 14, 16, 20 and 21). Gray (1903:xxx, xxxi) provides a definitive summary of the origins of the JE composition: 'These works were (1) a compilation (JE) which was made at the end of the 7th century B.C., and consisted for the most part of extracts from a Judaean collection of stories (J) of the 9th century B.C., and a similar collection (E) made in the Northern kingdom in the 8th century B.C.' Though Gray was of the opinion that JE could be separated in some narratives in Numbers, he found that the JE narrative in Numbers 16 was so closely interwoven that he did not attempt such a bifurcation. More recent, Olson follows Gray with this classical view of JE:

> In broad strokes, the earlier J and E traditions (dating anywhere from the
> tenth to the eighth centuries B.C.E.) are thought to be earlier and

concentrated in Numbers 11-25. While scattered throughout the book, the later Priestly material (dating roughly from the sixth or fifth centuries B.C.E.) is most in evidence in chapters 1-10 and chapters 26-36. Most scholars further agree that supplementary material was subsequently added to Numbers even after the inclusion of the Priestly tradition.

(Olson 1996:3)

Martin Noth generally accepted the tenets of source criticism but more distinctly expects that J and E were transmitted orally before they were documented. Regarding Numbers particularly, Noth believes that the narratives and the poetical sources are considerably older than the textual product.

There is no doubt that the 'old sources', in so far as they find expression in Numbers, go back to very early traditions which, to begin with, would be transmitted orally before they found their way into the narrative works J and E. This holds good for some of the longer narrative complexes, above all for the 'spy' story in ch. 13-14 which, from a tradition-historical point of view, goes back to a Calebite tradition from Hebron of the occupation of Hebron by Caleb, and also for the Balaam story in ch. 22-24 which probably originated in the sanctuary of Baal-Peor in the southern part of the territory east of the Jordan and which presents the nature and appearance of a 'seer' in a unique and very original way. The Balaam discourses, at any rate those of ch. 24, are comparatively old poetic pieces. Several other poetical sections, which have been inserted into the narrative context of the 'old sources' are probably older still.

(Noth 1968:11)

Though Noth considers the origins of the JE source to be quite ancient, it is Olson who reminds us of the consequential setting of compiling and redacting of the documents during post-exilic times:

But the definitive shaping of the book of Numbers in roughly its present form likely occurred sometime after the Babylonian exile (587-538 B.C.E.). The book of Numbers was the product of the Jewish community's struggle to understand the pain and punishment of exile and its implications for Israel's relationship to God, Israel's definition as a people, and Israel's posture toward the promised land, which had been lost but was now about to be regained.

(Olsen 1996:3)

As the nature of JE continues to be debated (Rendtorff 1977:175), there appears

some basic agreement that the earliest sources were either written or oral, originating in

monarchic or pre-monarchic Israel but received their final revisions in post-exilic times.

The ability to demarcate JE from P and D in Numbers 16 and 17 is not widely disputed

and there exists an approximate consensus on these divisions.

3.2.3   The P source in Numbers

The situation with the P source is more controversial than the emendation of the other

strands in the Tetrateuch, but this analysis will tend to focus on the debate as it relates to

the book of Numbers. An examination of the classical source critical position and more

recent detours and objections regarding the priestly source will clarify what issues

continue to be unresolved and those where a rudimentary consensus exists. The general

consensus regarding the date and nature of P will accentuate the value of the narrative of

Numbers 16 and 17 as a centerpiece for the entire book.

Graf, followed by Wellhausen, was the first to postulate that P was the latest of

the strands, after J, E, and D (Alexander 2002:14). Wellhausen originally deduced that P

was comprised of two different strands, an original narrative much like J or E, which he

entitled Q (later widely acclaimed as P^g = P + *Grundschrift*), and then a second strand

which was nearly all legal material known as P^s (P + supplementa) (Nicholson 1998:17).

In time, some source critics adjudged the bulk of the priestly material in Numbers 16 and

17 to be P^g with some minor P^s contributions (Von Rad used the siglon P^g with the

supplements P^a and P^b), while more recently some have preferred to view P as more

unified, and they are less inclined to segregate P^s from P^g. Werner Schmidt (1995:96)

acknowledged the convoluted task of dating the supplements made to P, saying: 'In the case of many of the additions, especially in the book of Numbers, it is difficult to determine whether they are supplements to the originally independent Priestly document or additions made after the combining of the sources.' While the specifics are inscrutable, it is expected that contributions were made to the P source over many centuries.

Gray's commentary presents perhaps the most sustained and traditionally accepted source critical analyses of the book of Numbers in the modern era, representing classical source critical methods well. He acknowledges that the P school is composed of both narrative and legal material over the course of many generations (Gray 1903:xxxiii). He defines the three sources which make up P as: P^g which depicts the foundational work (believed to be a single author), mostly dealing with priestly institutions, P^s for materials older than P^g; and P^x is his designation for materials whose origins are indeterminate as P^g or P^s. The fact that Gray has to categorize some texts as P^x is a signal that establishing decisive classifications for P^g and P^s is problematic. The assumption is that the P^g strand is confined to brief accounts of historical and institutional origins. Yet, there remain questions concerning the scope of P^g, and the date of the composition of the supplements to P^g in relation to the date they were added to P^g, particularly in Numbers with the relative age of the law material versus the narrative. The rebellion of Korah is a case in point for Gray (1903:xxxvi) who finds the origin of the narrative of chapter 16 (P^g) and the related law material of chapter 18 ambiguous. Gray (1903:189-210) depicted an outline for Numbers 16 which has received strong support:

16:1a   P
16:1b   JE

16:2-7	P^g
16:8-11	P^s
16:12-15	JE
16:16, 17	P^s
16:18-24	P^g
16:25a	JE
16:26-27a	P^g
16:27b-34	JE
16:35	P^g
16:36-40	P^s
16:41-50	P^g
17:1-5	P^s
17:6-15	P^g

Since Gray's esteemed work in Numbers, particularly on the composition of the priestly source, there has been considerable wrangling over the nature of P and its dating. These two topics are completely interwoven issues that cannot be divided as the answer to one affects the results of the other. I will survey this issue tracing the developments chronologically and covering the major works related specifically to the book of Numbers, and most particularly Numbers 16 and 17.

In the same era as Gray was Driver (1892:129) who was a forerunner in dating P to the Babylonian captivity, based predominately on the assertion that much of P's cultic and institutional instructions are absent from the historical books, particularly those of Judges and Samuel. This later dating of P was the dominant view, though various objections have been raised in recent works discussed below.

In J. de Vaulx's influential commentary, he holds a traditional but flexible view upholding a P^g source but then a P^s that supplemented P^g over a long period of time, right into the Persian period, supplements which adjusted to the changing circumstances and issues of the day. He maintains a rather fluid view of the source critical configuration of the sources:

> S'il est possible de classer la plupart des textes dans les grandes etapes de la composition du Pentateuque, L, J, E, JE, Pg, Ps, il est impossible de retrouver a l'etat pur une seule de ces couches, de l'isoler et de la suivre tout au long du recit. Le travail de redaction ne s'est pas fait par sedimentation, mais par une veritable assimilation progressive au cours des ages.
>
> (De Vaulx 1972:19)

The relationship between P and the older sources, JE, is an ongoing discussion but many ascribe with McEvenue that P seems to pre-suppose JE. McEvenue (1971:24-89) not only highlighted the reliance of P upon J, but at the same time expressed specific divergences from J which include: an amplification of dramatic effect, a flair for rhetorical grammatical style, a manipulation of materials in the same order as J with a theological outlook, and often a de-psychologising of J.

Noth's construal of the P source accrued sustained popularity even though he was not as inclined to identify divisions between P^s and P^g. Noth proposed that P was predominately historiographical in nature with the final redactor of the Pentateuch utilizing the P source as the basis and framework of his text. This preference for the priestly sources is evidenced in Numbers 16 and 17 according to Noth. 'Likewise in Num. 16 only fragments of the old Dathan –Abiram story have been worked into the Korah story of P; and above all, here again the beginning of the story has been so heavily mutilated in favor of P that it can no longer be reconstructed with any certainty' (Noth 1972:15). Noth (1972:274) generally follows Gray in his divisions of Numbers 16 and 17 concurring that the chapter is a blend of two stories with some braiding:

16:1a   P
16:1b   J (to 'took men')
16:2-11   P

16:12-15   J
16:16-24   P
16:25-26   J
16:27a   P
16:27b-34   J
16:35-50   P
17:1-13   P

Noth (1968:15) speculated that the rebellion story was added very late in the composition of the Tetrateuch and was inserted into the only place that it would fit into the flow of the larger narrative. 'Even within P, Num. 16 and 17 appears at a peculiar place. However, this section is probably a supplement to the P narrative (P^s), which was inserted into P at the last possible place, i.e., directly before the final themes of the death of Miriam, Aaron and Moses...and as a consequence attracted the Dathan-Abiram story to its present place.' Noth presents the rebellion in Numbers 16 as being late in origin and representing the controversies specific to post-exilic Jerusalem.

> Later on a few passages were added to the Pentateuchal narrative which had a polemical bias, behind which lay particular controversies of the contemporary period, such as the obscure Dathan-Abiram story in Num. 16 or the story of the "golden calf" in Ex. 32, not to mention the late priestly and postpriestly narratives which reflect controversies within the cultic staff of Jerusalem, such as the Korah story in Num. 16 or the Phinehas story in Num. 25:6ff., and others.
>
> (Noth 1968:196)

Gray (1903:188) attempts to identify the sources in this rebellion narrative by the allusions to the Korah story outside the narrative itself. He affirms the narrative is priestly because of its notation in Numbers 27:3, a priestly section, and the Dathan and Abiram story emanates from JE, known to the deuteronomist (Dt 11:6).

In his commentary, Gray (1903:189ff) bisects Numbers 16 and treats each story separately to establish the divergent aims of the compositional communities, JE and P. His estimation is that Dathan and Abiram (JE) revolted against Moses' supremacy as a

leader and his ineffectual deliverance (Nm 16:13, 14) stemming from their discontent over losing their tribal primacy as Reubenites (Gn 49:3, 4) (Gray 1903:189, 190). On the other hand, Korah (P^g) rebelled out of a generic concern for the entire congregation, not the specific dispute between the non-Aaronic Levites who want to be in the priesthood. This specific dispute was added by P^s which reflects the perceived conflict between the priests and Levites in post-exilic Israel. 'When the intrusive passages of P^s have been removed, nothing remains to indicate that either Korah himself or any of his followers ranked in P^g as Levites' (Gray 1903:192). Levine (1993:406) disagrees with Gray regarding the motives being divided in P^g and P^s, believing there to be one central Korahite rebellion that develops and unfolds over the course of Numbers 16. 'The unfolding of the priestly materials reveals the central issue of the priestly school. Thus, Num 16:8-11 amplify and clarify Num 16:3-7 by focusing on the internecine struggle for power within the tribe of Levi...' (Levine 1993:406).

In the second half of the twentieth century, various objections were leveled against the traditional views of sources critics. More than small variations were being proposed and there were some disaffected with source critical assumptions and philosophical moorings. The nature and dating of the priestly source was also under scrutiny.

One of these objections focused on the compositional nature of P. Was P a document that was passed on and used or expanded upon by redactors, or was it only a siglon for an author/editor group or person? Frank Cross (1973:324) deviated from the traditional view and strongly asserted that P was never actually an independent source: 'The Priestly work was composed by a narrow school or single tradent using many

written and, no doubt, some oral documents. Most important among them was the Epic (JE) tradition.' Erhard Blum follows Cross in the assertion the priestly layer was never an independent source but he is determined that the P work was more compositional than redactional (Nicholson 1998:203-204). Cross upholds the work of P as compiling, editing, and supplementing, completed late in the sixth century late in the exile. And finally, the priestly work which constitutes JEP was the penultimate form of the Tetrateuch.

Soggin (1976:135-145) notes the complexity of P's origins but maintains that the earlier traditions of P were under development during the first temple period likely in the Jerusalem sanctuary. He further asserts that this material was redacted to J, E, and possibly D, during the later part of the exile and into the postexilic period resulting in a composition similar or identical to the Pentateuch which we now possess. The *terminus ante quem* had to be prior to the separation with the Samaritans, as their Pentateuch possesses an approximate unity with the Masoretic Text.

Werner Schmidt also makes a substantive case for a late date of P.

> The basic document (P^G) arose during the exile, while the additions (P^S) were made rather during the postexilic period. In any case, in its narrative sections and certainly in the legal sections as in the lists, P is based on previous traditional material, which it recast. Consequently the date of the fixing of the material in writing still tells us little of the age of the tradition itself; the latter must be determined in each individual case.
>
> (Schmidt 1995:99).

However, other scholars published views that were suspicious of the traditional model, especially in relation to P.

In this same era, several prominent Old Testament scholars began to malign source critical assumptions more broadly. Rolff Rendtorff (1977:180-181) and also his

student Erhard Blum, advocated that previous form and tradition-historical critics naively accepted the views of source criticism and the classical divisions of JEDP. Rendtorff ardently opposes the existence of 'continuous' sources in the Pentateuch, but rather proposes the development of small units that grew through stages into larger units, independent of one another until they were combined at a late date.

Gordon Wenham is skeptical of source critical findings related to Numbers 16 and 17 and regards the text as a unity concluding: 'it seems simplest to regard Numbers 16-17 as a unit. If it is based on more than one source, they are different from JE, P^g or P^s' (Wenham 1981:142). He highlights the incongruities between the putative JE rebellion of Abiram and Dathan and the reconstructions of P^g and P^s postulated by Gray and Schmidt; a reconstruction that can only be maintained by significant editing and braiding of the sources. According to Wenham, the dramatic and well integrated narrative is not the product of the commonly held source critical injunctions. Wenham quotes Rendtorff's confession that: 'We possess hardly any reliable criteria for dating pentateuchal literature. Every dating of the pentateuchal "sources" rests on purely hypothetical assumptions, which only have any standing through the consensus of scholars' (Wenham 1981:23).

Important studies were conducted by Menahem Haran (1981), Avi Hurvitz (1982) and Jacob Milgrom (1991) all concluding that, contrary to the traditional view that P is late, the language and style of P better reflects that of pre-exilic Israel. Haran (1981:331) specifically associates the emergence of P with the tumultuous period of Ahaz and Hezekiah, while Hurvitz concluded that the linguistic conventions of P were prior to that of Ezekiel (Whybray 1995:25). Frankel's detailed study of P concludes that the priestly

school should not be viewed as only a late, postexilic addition but included: 'a long history of literary growth. Early priestly narrative traditions have undergone successive literary expansions so that P is both early as well as late' (Frankel 2002:8-9). In Frankel's final analysis, he purports three stages of composition: an early P source that supported the Aaronite priesthood and included the 250 Israelites (pre-exilic), the addition of a murmuring-speech and the Dathan/Abiram rebellion, and the final layer of the Korah rebellion (Frankel 2002:244). If Frankel's formulation is approximately correct, the earliest layer of P upholds a general rebellion in the wilderness and is the foundation upon which the rest of the rebellion epic was built.

In the main, Milgrom is suspicious of detailed source critical demarcations but certainly does not abandon the theory. Speaking directly to the sources in Numbers and Korah's rebellion, he states: 'Since the existence of a discrete literary source for the priestly writings is highly questionable....I shall use the term "source" circumspectly. On the other hand, there is a clear distinction in style and ideology between those texts called priestly and those called epic' (Milgrom 1989:xix). From the P source, Milgrom (1992:458, 459) separates the vocabulary of the Holiness Code, *Heiligkeitsgesetz*, (Lev 17-26) and finds the remaining sample of P's terminology to emanate from pre-exilic Israel, specifically to the middle of the 8th century, contradicting the traditional consensus that P is wholly exilic and postexilic. Milgrom is not inclined to accept P as a source and argues specifically from Numbers, considering both structural analysis and source analysis saying:

> Thus, if one still wishes to adhere to the documentary theory, two strands of P would have to be posited: the earlier one (P_1), responsible for the structure; and the later (P_2 or H), which added to and even altered the components of the structure. . . . In any event, both P recensions (with the

exception of editorial transitions and glosses) must stem from the early monarchy. Moreover, the fact that the P strata are recensions means that, at least in this instance, we can no longer speak of a P source.

<div align="right">(Milgrom 1989:421, 422)</div>

Regarding Numbers 16, Milgrom postulates with confidence the compositeness of the narrative with the Dathan and Abiram story being an independent literary entity, which he calls epic, which at some time was supplemented by P.

Milgrom is decisive that Numbers 16 is a composite but suspects there were possibly many layers to the revisions made beyond the ultimate and penultimate recensions, though reticent to strictly define the content of earlier editorial layers. His early dating of his putative P source marks a departure from traditional source critical consensus.

At the same time, there have continued to be source critics that maintain traditional views regarding P. Budd (1984:xxii) upheld the late dating of P but was more modest in ascribing strict divisions within the priestly source. Budd (1984:xix) states his preference in his commentary: 'The view adopted here is that as recognizable entities the priestly revisions of tradition belong essentially with that influential movement in Judaism which originated in Babylon in exilic times, and which effected a resettlement in Palestine from the late sixth century onward.' Budd notes that there is general acceptance of the divisions in Numbers and tends to follow the outline of Noth (1984:xxii).

Levine (1993:49) tends to follow Budd in observing the prominent work of P as the controlling redactor and author. 'As regards the book of Numbers, the primary challenge is to explain how priestly writers recast the JE traditions and expanded upon

them, thereby reconstructing the record of the wilderness period so as to focus on their central concerns.' The final editing of the Pentateuch is perceived by many to have been a brilliant work of the P 'school.' Friedman (1987:98) up holds the status of classical source critical conclusions and marvels at the extraordinary skill of the redactor who brought together the strata, a synthesis that 'is richer than the sum of its components.' Friedman feels that the final redactor was forced to include all the strata as the contents of each had become widely known and the audience would not tolerate omissions.

In summary, there remain nagging questions, and certainly clear disagreement in scholarship regarding the nature and date of P. For example, when was the final redaction of the P strata? Does P represent the final redaction of the Pentateuch? What is the scope of P^g and the resulting questions related to its supplementation? Does P reflect long standing religious controversies or only those experienced in post-exilic Israel? As their continues to be disagreement on these issues, mostly because sufficient evidence does not exist at this time to solve them, there are some broad assumptions that will maintain some momentum for this study.

While Noth concedes that Numbers contains a considerable amount of early material, he expects that the bulk of its content to be late. 'It is not possible in every case to give an exact date, but it certainly originated in the post-exilic cultic community in Jerusalem and is of interest and importance for our knowledge of the ordinances and concepts prevalent in that late period' (Noth 1968:10). The evidence now seems compelling that the P materials have their origins over many centuries perhaps as early as pre-monarchic Israel and as late as the post-exilic fourth century BC (Soggin 1976:143).

This suggests that the controversies, that is general rebellion and threat of rebellion, reflected in the final recension of P were problems that existed in some fashion for a long time, perhaps enduring to some degree for the previous three or four centuries. Though no unified consensus exists, if one draws from the various positions, it seems broadly acceptable to say that the priestly contribution to the Tetrateuch emanated from Israel's origins, first orally and then in written form, but blossomed in the post-exilic period. Though few address the reliability of the late redactors, Karel van der Toorn argues that while there may have been scattered writing by Israelites earlier than the postexilic period, the canonization process of 'book making' occurred in the Persian period from 500 to 200 B.C. (Van der Toorn 2007:2). He further ascribes positive motives to the redactors: 'The scribes…aimed to produce a document that would have the support of different textual communities. By writing a work that integrated documents with different ideas and perspectives, the scribes were creating a national written heritage that transcended earlier divisions' (Van der Toorn 2007:141).

3.3   The composite nature of Numbers 16 and 17

Source critics have long ascribed the story of Korah's rebellion to be an amalgamation of at least two separate rebellion stories. A strong consensus supports two fragments within the storyline were interlaced: Korah (P) acts separately from Dathan and Abiram (JE) as the two groups are addressed separately by Moses, and are punished separately, and at differing locations (Coats 1968:156-162; Gordon 1991:65). Also, Deuteronomy 11:6 alludes to only Dathan and Abiram in reference to the rebellion, while Numbers 27:3

mentions only Korah, which also implies that the Numbers 16 rebellion story was once two separate fragments, or at least perceived that way (Gray 1903:187).

There was a minority position, held by Benjamin Bacon and August Dillmann, that a third rebellion story (J) subsisted representing On and his a complaint about sacrificial functions explicated from Moses' response for Yahweh not to 'accept their offering' (Nm 16:15) (Gray 1903:190). However, when this third story is detached and assembled, it is quite incomplete as compared to the detail and complexity of the other two stories. Gray (:188) says this 'was never more than a parasitic growth on the combination of the two original stories.' Some newer source critics have tended to view the inclusion of On as an example of dittography (Budd 1984:180; Gray 1903:190) or alternatively, he was an important figure at the beginning of the rebellion, warranting his inclusion in the initial list, but played virtually no part in the ensuing drama. It seems most natural to conclude that Numbers 16 is an amalgamation of two stories, each slightly different in the nature of the conflict but united in their plot lines. Each story includes a conflict between disgruntled subordinates who rebelled against their divinely appointed leaders which resulted in swift and extraordinary divine punishment. At an unknown juncture, these two stories were purposely integrated by a redactor, for a reason that was more than just expediency, distinctively crafted to enhance the literary quality and dramatic effect of the narrative.

3.4   Conclusion

The structure of Numbers as configured by Dennis Cole, and the patterning suggested by Mary Douglas, commandingly places the story of Korah's rebellion at the climatic center

of the book, trumpeting the story's importance and theological potency. While the outline of Numbers presented by Cole does not form a satisfying chiastic structure, the effect remains similar, flagging prominence to this central narrative. It is also noteworthy that the book of Numbers temporally covers forty years with approximately thirty-nine years of wandering. Korah's rebellion story is the only representative narrative during this wandering, presumptively meant to characterize the period (Gray 1903:xxvi). From a literary perspective, this rebellion story is a featured account that epitomizes the experience of Israel and her leaders while in the desert.

The prestigious quality of Korah's rebellion narrative by its placement in the book of Numbers is likewise endorsed by the results of source critical examination. A review of source critical progress concludes that the priestly redactors, at some stage, made the decision to intertwine the Korah rebellion (P) with the Dathan and Abiram rebellion (JE) for a particular literary benefit. As both stories are almost complete, having characters, narrative tension, and resolution, there is no reason why the stories could not have been recounted consecutively. Presumably, the priestly redactor(s) noted the common theme and plot of the two stories and felt there was a dramatic gain produced by the amalgamation of these two stories. The blend of two stories requires the reader to track two plots in their mind and stirs their imagination to consider how these two plotlines are related to one another. This triggers the reader's imagination in a micro intertextual reading that stimulates reflection between the two narratives. Furthermore, as the dual plotlines come to fruition, the dramatic apex is heightened by the impact of the two divine punishments that strike in tandem. Therefore, it is an examination of the final form of Numbers 16 and 17 that will yield a bountiful interpretation as anticipated by the

redactor(s), who combined the stories (P with JE) at an unknown stage in the compositional process of Numbers.

4 THE NARRATOR AND POINT OF VIEW IN NUMBERS 16 AND 17

4.1 Introduction

Though the nature of 'point of view' and the essence of the narrator remain controvertible subjects in narratology, their pervading presence within the story world and their significance for guiding the reader should not be underestimated. The narrator naturally infuses his/her point of view into the story ranging from overt to covert and also supplies the perspective of characters, mostly through their dialogue and sometimes through their actions. For the reader, contending points of view elicit tension and drama, but in a dissimilar fashion from the plot of the story. Rather than only observing the events and surface elements of the text, attention to point of view features contributes to the escalation of suspense created by its manner of narration. In most cases, point of view analysis provides contributing factors to establishing features of plot and is associated with elements in the literary analysis of characterization. This chapter will discuss the contributions of scholars to the issue of "point of view" (broadly construed); how biblical narratologists appropriated this in their research, and then proceed to apply this refined theory to Numbers 16 and 17. Ultimately, this chapter will provide interpretive insights through a consideration of 'point of view' and will clarify issues for the chapters that follow.

Part of what marks the Old Testament as possessing literariness is the quality of its narration, the evidence of discourse and levels of narration (Rimmon-Kenan 2002:116-117). Rather than being a flat or unified narration, the discourse of biblical narratives often includes multilevel, sometimes a polyphonic phenomenon that provides texture to a story. 'This ability to shift the camera eye gives a sense of multi-dimensional

depth—the antithesis of flatness. It also provides the author with a variety of ways in which to convey his narrative' (Berlin 1983:45). So too, Hebrew narratives possess their own brand of narration and variations in perspective.

4.2   Point of view in modern literary theory

Several influential scholars such as: Lubbock (1921), Brooks and Warren (1943), Friedman (1967), Booth (1983) and Stanzel (1984) elucidated the concept of point of view, making it a major rubric for narrative investigation (Tolmie 1999:29). Since the time of these earlier theorists, the most widely adopted proposal for point of view examination is found in the work of Boris Uspensky (1973). He offers a categorical yet nuanced way of considering point of view, an approach well suited for application to biblical narratives (cf. Berlin 1994:55-56; Resseguie 2005:169; Yamasaki 2006:91). Uspensky finds that point of view is manifested in four 'spheres' or 'planes': ideological, phraseological, spatial and temporal, and psychological (Uspensky 1973:5). First, the ideological (or evaluative) point of view underscores broad conceptions of the world and its systems (*Weltanschauung*). The ideological evaluation is least interesting, according to Uspensky (1973:8), when the work presents a single point of view which dominates the text. The biblical narrative is often thought to be monologic because of the assertive presence of the narrator and the dominating theological point of view that subordinates other ideological viewpoints that may emerge. However, this is not always the case, and the detection of varying points of view makes a prolific contribution to an analysis of biblical narratives that especially enriches the interpretation of conflict driven narratives.

Second, Uspensky (1973:17-18) advocates the plane of phraseology that examines speech characteristics, levels of narration, discourse strategies—the 'functional sentence

perspective.' In particular, the phraseological plane provides indications of the shifts between the narrator's and the character's perspective within the story and allows for a consideration of the congruity or conflicts between them. The attraction of Uspensky's theory to biblical narrative critics 'is his sensitivity to language as an indicator of point of view' (Berlin 1983:57).

Third, the spatial and temporal planes represent 'the coordinates from which the narration is conducted' (Uspensky 1973:57). While in art this refers to the position from which the artist produced their work. In literature, this is accomplished by considering the relations between the author and the scene that they are describing. Uspensky (1973:58) notes that the author is almost entirely bound to the character(s) by being required to describe their spatial and temporal movements. Though Sternberg (1985:264-265) and others have examined deeply the wide variety of temporal shifts used in the biblical corpus, these will not be developed in detail here, as they are not an issue in the narrative of Korah's rebellion due to the story's consecutive and rather evenly spaced narration.

Fourth, on the psychological plane, the author may choose to reveal information from an objective unimpassioned point of view, using bland narration, or they may elect to express information in a highly subjective mode. Of course, this can occur in alternation, combination, or at various levels (Uspensky 1973:81). Furthermore, the omniscient narrator may choose to reveal information through the eyes of a character within the story, often revealing a perspective that includes a higher level of emotion and subjectivism (internal point of view vs. external point of view).

112

Another important contribution to perspective theory was made by Seymour Chatman (1978:151-153) who proposed three categories (perceptual, conceptual, interest) in which point of view can be understood, though his categories are not radically divergent from Uspensky's planes. The 'perceptual' point of view tracks the events visually, through someone's eyes like a virtual camera that follows the events and the way they are perceived. The 'conceptual' point of view captures the broader worldview, beliefs, conceptions and attitudes of the narrator. And, the 'interest' point of view is the tracing of someone's benefit or disadvantage within the course of the story. It is this last category, the interest point of view that was criticized by Genette and has evoked greater elaboration. Genette highlighted the difference between the narrator's conceptual point of view and the character's because it is from outside the story (heterodiegetic), while a character's conceptual point of view is from within the story (homodiegetic). Genette appealed to Plato's usage of *diegesis* (that is, the story told rather than *mimesis*, the story acted), and advanced heterodiegetic and homodiegetic as superior terms over 1st person and 3rd person narrative because they more directly locate the narrator's perspective and location relative to the story (Genette 1980:50-51; Abbott 2002:68, 189-190).

Gerard Genette's work created a watershed particularly regarding point of view theory and ushered in a second generation of theorists (Rimmon-Kenan and Bal) who would adopt his conception of focalization and would refine his theory. While Uspensky and Chatman had previously acknowledged the issue minimally, Genette dramatically underscored the difference between *who sees* (perceptual point of view) and *who speaks* (narration) as he considered point of view theory to be inconsistent in its treatment of these two questions. To help resolve this incongruence Genette (1980:189-191) proposed

a classification which he called focalization, which still conserves a visual connotation, that includes three types: (1) non-focalized or zero focalization where the narrator knows more than the characters and expresses such knowledge, (2) internal focalization that can be fixed or variable, when the narration is conducted through the eyes of one or more characters, and (3) external focalization, with the narration being focused on the character and not through them. Though this conception was ground breaking, it required greater refinement and definition to be most effectual.

The next generation of narratologists after Genette tended to reclassify point of view into two parts: focalization and narration. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan definitively separated the topics of focalization and narration as two distinct entities, answering separately the questions: who sees and who speaks? '[T]he distinction between the two activities is a theoretical necessity, and only on its basis can the interrelations between them be studied with precision' (Rimmon-Kenan 2002:73). Ostensibly, the 'visual', element of point of view is relegated most naturally to answer the question of who sees, while narration addresses the question of who speaks. Rimmon-Kenan's enhancement of narration is proximate to Uspensky's phraseological plane that also amplifies the textual indicators of point of view. Nonetheless, the theorists who adhere to focalization as a concept have adorned point of view studies with more descriptive language and greater nuance, though point of view, as a traditional segment of narrative theory, continues to be used as an umbrella term.

An important nuance to focalization was contributed by Mieke Bal (1997:142-160) who adopted Genette's scheme but extended the distinction between the focalizer (subject) and the focalized (object). This delineation identifies two poles, subject and

object, as poles on either side of the discourse. Bal (1997:143) prefers to separate the issue of point of view into two categories: the first, as perspective to allocate the matters of physical and psychological perceptions and the second, focalization to trace matters of narration. While some theorists tend to relate the nuance of focalization to the text, others clearly analyze the focalizer in relationship to the narrator, as they are considered decisively different abstractions (Bal 1997:19). The narrator provides the language, linguistics and techniques used to create narration; the focalization and the focalizer are found within the narration. Both Bal and Rimmon-Kenon have advanced Genette's work by enlarging the field of narration and in a manner that still complements the work of Uspensky.

Assembling a broader overview for categorizing focalization has been achieved by O'Neill (1992:336) who presented an alternative grid for understanding focalization delineating three levels of focalization (simple, compound, and complex) that can be in operation in whole texts or restricted to parts. Simple focalization refers to the most common strategy employed by writers and involves a single focalizer, usually the narrator. Though the narrator never really releases their control over focalization, they are still superintending when diverting to compound focalization, for focalization is essentially a strategy of mediation (O'Neill 1992:331). Compound focalization is in operation when the narrator uses the perspective of a character within the narrative—a character focalizer. Numbers 16 and 17 utilizes compound focalization with a pronounced advantage to the reader—alternating between narrator and character focalization. O'Neill asserts that all character focalization is embedded within the narrator's focalization. Rimmon-Kenan (2002:78) also recognizes the transitory nature

of focalization strategies and espouses similar categories noting degrees of persistence: fixed, variable, or multiple focalizations. This maneuver by the narrator exposes, and sometimes creates competing perspectives and often adds increasing texture and sophistication to the interpretation of a story. When the focalization becomes diffused this is called complex focalization, considered rare in biblical narratives, as the focalizer becomes obscure or indeterminate. O'Neill also upholds the significance of focalization to the reader: 'Insofar as it can have a very major impact on the way the reader perceives the narrative world presented, focalization is clearly a powerful manipulative device' (O'Neill 1992:342). It is this subtle power of focalization that is highlighted in this chapter. Having previewed the most relevant and recent advances in point of view theory, this study will now examine how biblical narratologists have adopted or nuanced this corpus for analysis of biblical narratives.

4.3   Appropriation of point of view theory by biblical narrative critics

Recognizing from the outset that Hebrew narratives are dominated by 3rd person narration (notable exceptions are 1st person sections in Ezra, Nehemiah and Qohelet), leaves a fairly narrow range of literary theory which remains relevant for application to biblical narratives—especially with reference to point of view. For certain, modern novels blossom with a far greater range of narrative arrangements than biblical narratives. Modern narratives possess varying compound and complex focalization strategies that extends the need for broad description and literary theory far beyond that which is necessitated for biblical narratives. Nonetheless, while biblical narration has a contracted range of point of view variations, restricted by predominate usage of 3rd person narration

by an omniscient narrator; this should not suggest that biblical narration is without its own brand of complexity and depth. As will be manifested, the tension produced by the compound focalization of Numbers 16 and 17 exacerbates the factional hostilities within the story.

When surveying the major biblical narratologists three general groups emerge: (1) those who analyze point of view closely following Uspensky's four-fold planes (Berlin, Resseguie), (2) those who acknowledge point of view but apply focalization to matters of narration (Tolmie, Ska, Funk), and (3) those who are aware of the issues involved in point of view theory but do not address the topic in a direct and sustained manner taking a generative approach centered more on narration than point of view (Sternberg, Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, Alter, Fokkelman, Bar-Efrat, Amit). This analysis will borrow most heavily from focalization theory using Rimmon-Kenan's categories, and then lastly to derive insights from the more generative ideas of those attentive to narration specific to Hebrew narratives.

Perhaps one of the best treatments of point of view by a biblical narratologist is found in the work of Adele Berlin. Working contemporaneously with the Rimmon-Kenan, Bal, and Lanser, though not embracing focalization, Adele Berlin (1983:43-82) adopts the four-fold theory of point of view from Uspensky, but she astutely attends to the voice of the narrator in her own way, and at least in a minimal fashion, addresses the questions of who sees and who speaks? 'In biblical narrative the narrator moves constantly between external and internal presentations, sometimes stepping back for a panoramic view and then moving close-in to a character to view things through his eyes, even getting into his mind to explain his actions and reactions' (Berlin 1994:58). Her

work stands out in its appropriation of Uspensky yet would benefit from the enhancements of Bal and Rimmon-Kenan to accommodate the intricacies of the focalizer and the focalized, though this appropriation does remain somewhat controvertible amongst some biblical narratologists.

Ska (2000:65-81) upholds focalization over traditional point of view theory and recognizes its benefit to the reader who perceives point of view as the 'third dimension' of the narrative. 'When one misses the "perspective" of the narrative, one sees only a flat, two-dimensional surface. To discover its relief, it is necessary to discover the "eye of the camera", namely the "focalization(s)" chosen by the narrator' (Ska 2000:79). Ska feels that Genette's presentation of focalization is superior to other conceptual grids. Incisively Ska (2000:70) suggests that changes in focalization indicate that the narrator is trying to make a particular impact upon the reader.

Tolmie (1999:32-33) also endorses focalization, though has espoused in a cursory manner only two aspects: the locus of focalization and the focalized object(s). Discerning the locus of focalization, whether the focalization originates from outside or inside the narrative (external or internal), has considerable merit in discerning the identity of the focalizer and their vantage point. Both of these aspects are helpful for description, acknowledging layers of perception available to the reader. However, Eslinger's insight here is adroit in describing the advantage and liberty of the 3rd person omniscient narrator (heterodiegetic) over the 1st person participant: 'the external narrator is untouched by the limitations that the story world imposes on all its inhabitants. His existential immunity makes for more potential reliability in objective perception and description of events and characters within the story' (Eslinger 1989:14).

Additionally, Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan has brought together, in a masterful way, the nuanced work of Genette and focalization theory with categories reminiscent of Uspensky. Along with Mieke Bal, she distinguishes the focalizer from the focalized. She delineates the focalizer as being either external or internal relative to the story, in a practical way, similar to that of Stanzel and Chatman. However, when examining the focalized, Rimmon-Kenan (2002:77) considers whether the narration follows the outward actions of the focalized (external), or the psychological facets of the focalized (internal). Rimmon-Kenan (2002:78-84) analyzes narration considering three types of focalization: perceptual, psychological, and ideological. The perceptual facet considers space related to the locus of focalization, the vantage point of the narration, and time, considering all of the temporal elements of the discourse. The psychological facet explores both the cognitive component (knowledge, conjecture, belief, and memory) as well as the emotive components that unearth the subjective human inner life. The ideological facet denotes both the authoritative worldview of the narrator-focalizer as the dominant norm of the discourse as well as the competing ideologies that emerge, usually through character-focalizers. Rimmon-Kenan (2002:83) also concedes to Bakhtin that competing ideologies may lead to a polyphonic reading of a text. On the macro level, Rimmon-Kenan acknowledges that there may be concurrence amongst the facets, or there may be disagreement, particularly between the psychological and ideological facets. Rimmon-Kenan presents a mature model of focalization that accepts both the enhanced and critiqued work of Genette and that engages that more traditional facets of structuralist analysis exemplified in Uspensky.

119

Biblical narrative critics are divided as to whether to employ the conception of point of view or focalization, post-Genette, and have tended rather to centralize narration and the narrator, having its own benefit. Fokkelman, like Bar-Efrat, has advanced the notion of the narrator's values and knowledge pervading the narrative. 'The biblical writers have at their disposal a range of tools with which they convey their values to the reader. These forms and techniques may be arranged along a scale that runs from very clear and explicit to vague, implicit, and well-hidden' (Fokkelman 1999:149). Bar-Efrat develops this scale under the headings of overt versus covert as a way of assessing the intensity of the narrator's infusion of their own point of view into the text.

4.4   The biblical narrator

Certainly, the narrator is 'variously described as an instrument, a construction, or a device wielded by the author' (Abbott 2002:63). So too, the biblical narrator is an abstraction, a collection of tendencies and patterns found within the Hebrew Bible that are construed to represent the voice and expression of the implied author. The biblical narrator is considered a singular abstracted voice, even though as source criticism has well established, multiple authors or redactors stand behind its creation. The bearing of the narrator in communicating the biblical story is not to be underestimated:

> All biblical narrative is mediated by a narrator. The narrator is the reader's guide, a medium for the duration of the story. The reader is closer to the narrator than to any of the characters in the story….As readers, all that we can know about the fictional story world is already filtered and interpreted for us by our ears, eyes, and nose—the biblical narrator.
>
> (Eslinger 1989:12)

Though separate constructs in literary theory, the narrator and implied author are not radically detached abstractions—they do possess a necessary accord. The narrator is the voice of the implied author, and provides the discourse of the abstracted implied author. Though the implied author is presumed to have full control over selection, ordering and structure of the material so as to guide the reader's cognition and imagination, it is the narrator who 'speaks'. The narrator is particularly highlighted in this chapter because concentration on point of view and focalization requires a more intricate analysis of the 'voice' and 'locus' of the implied author, but nevertheless, a broad divide between narrator and implied author is not always necessary or strongly intended.

In concert, the narrator is not to be mistaken for a person, though human contingencies may be at play, and their voice may be a 'character-like entity' (Abbott 2002:194). The narrator is not the same as the author, though certainly, an author or authors stand behind the voice of the narrator. Yet the narrator's voice must be abstracted from the text as the actual human author(s) are far beyond the theoretical accessibility of biblical readers. Several theoretical issues surrounding the nature, identity, and reliability of the narrator need to be addressed before proceeding to developing a methodology.

Narrators function reliably, defined by Booth (1983:159), when they conform to the norms of the work. But even the best of reliable authors partake in considerable incidental and difficult irony leaving them open to the charge of unreliability. Nonetheless, the biblical narrator is widely felt to be reliable (Amit 2001:95). The

121

narrator, standing outside the story, yet knowing the very thoughts of the characters, is superior in knowledge to the reader.

Though Chisholm (2002:404) thinks of the narrator as sometimes reverting to a limited perspective, this is only because of a false expectation of the omniscient narrator who cannot be required to reveal all the information all the time. The narrator's omniscience refers to their ability to know 'all things', but the production of aesthetic narratives requires that information be hidden from the audience or deferred in order to enchant the reader's cognitive reflection and imagination. In what follows, the conventional theory describing the biblical narrator will be surveyed, followed by a cataloguing of tendencies within Hebrew narratives that signal changes in point of view and significant point of view features.

The biblical narrator is generally restrained and distant, tending to put forward values by means of covert rather than overt means (Bar-Efrat 2004:13-45). Readers can easily identify the overt methods used by the narrator when candid explanations or evaluative commentary is added to a narration. These explicit interventions into the story decisively point the reader in an interpretive direction and are the highest level of narratorial domination. The narrator's authority in the biblical text is most overtly displayed in narratorial insertions at critical junctures in the story, but is powerfully maintained when the narrator employs broader covert strategies that exemplify the conceptual norms of the text or deride the testimony of detractors.

The identity of the biblical narrator as God remains a controvertible issue; however, it is not an issue that presents an obstacle for the literary critic. The uniqueness of biblical narration is that the narrator's omniscience—particularly the ability to know

the inner thoughts of characters and even more so, the very mind of God—and thus mirrors the very divine 'all knowing' quality that is highlighted by systematic theologians as foundational to God's nature. Fokkelman (1999:58) sensibly asserts that there is no literary reason to assume that God is the narrator of the biblical text; to presume them to be the same would have to be maintained through religious dogma rather than textual evidence and literary theory. Broadly speaking, the narrator does not use God as a 1st person narrator, though the God character is sometimes quoted in the 1st person with an obligatory formula ('Then the Lord said…'). This, in itself, is suggestive that the text does not equate God with the narrator. For example, in one of the most significant narratorial comments in the Old Testament regarding David's adultery and murder, the narrator uses the 3rd person: 'But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD' (2 Sm 11:27b; cf. Gn 6:6, 8; Ex 2:25; 4:14; 2 Sm 17:14). Furthermore, to fastidiously identify the narrator as God would raise another theological difficulty in having to explain the 'divine' narrator's potentially negative literary ethics, such as using misdirection in plots, and the withholding of information.

It is subsequently unfortunate that the term 'omniscient' is widely utilized of the narrator on two grounds: in religious circles, it maybe indicative that the narrator is God, and second, that it may be inferred that the narrator is always providing all the information about an event. 'The classical narrator of ancient and traditional narratives is "omniscient." He is almost like God: he knows everything and speaks with unabashed authority. This "privilege" is felt especially when he reveals the thoughts of the characters through "inside views"' (Ska 2000:44). The problem is that the abstracted biblical narrator is not God himself, as evidenced when God steps into a scene and

123

becomes a participant, a shift that is done without major syntactical disruption—usually only a stylized obligatory introduction, with dialogue ensuing like any other character within the story world. From a narratological perspective, the term 'omniscient' narrator is problematic as even these 'all knowing' narrators tend to intentionally leave informational gaps. Some gaps are never filled and some are filled but deferred to a later time, producing indeterminacy that generates reflection, angst, or aesthetic suspense within the reader. 'All narration is riddled with blind spots—gaps—which we must fill from our limited knowledge' (Abbott 2002:194). The narrator may be posited as omniscient but scarcely is the text itself entirely complete or patently 'omniscient'. Consequently, for this study, God is examined as a participant character, rather than an author or narrator (see chapter 5 of this study on Characterization).

In considering narrators as abstractions, though often shadowy and covert, their influence over a story's interpretation retains power and dominance. Very often readers are unaware of the influence of the narrator's perspective. 'When a narrator is omniscient and invisible, the reader tends to be unaware of the narrator's biases, values, and conception of the world and therefore tends to trust the narrator as a neutral, "objective" teller of events. But the narrator is not neutral' (Rhoads, Dewey & Michie 1999:43). Without doubt, the narrator's voice provides important clues as to the intentionality of the implied author and consequently, the assumptions that are to be inferred to the reader. Shimon Bar-Efrat chronicles three manners in which the narrator exerts their influence upon readers. (1) Evaluative terms, such as adjectives, or word usage that has connotative import, subtly exposing the narrator's opinions and judgments regarding persons or events. (2) The narrator's chosen perspective in reporting a story,

whether panoramic in a summary account, or in a dramatic detailed scene, certainly reveals the narrator's perception of the scene's importance. And (3), the narrator's characterization by: nominations or titles, advancing traits, describing social relations, or providing background in a way that divulges the narrator's perspective (Bar-Efrat 2004:32-36). Rimmon-Kenan (2002:78) prefers to consider 'degree of perceptibility' as opposed to overt and covert, but the distinction is not important as the level of narratorial presence will 'obviously lie on a spectrum that runs from minimal traces to maximum overtness' (Funk 1988:33). While these overall 'covert' operations of the narrator seem inconspicuous, they remain effectual and decidedly forceful in communicating the narrator's values to readers.

Though the biblical narrator tends to dominate the point of view, a reading strategy that does not quickly flee to the safety of the narrator's view point can be pleasing and beneficial—particularly because the narrator choose to espouse varying perspectives of the characters. For lingering on rival points of view allows the reader's imagination to explore the emotional, psychological or worldview conflicts and questions in the dialectic between two or more contending positions. For example: in the case of Korah's rebellion, readers should wonder; do Korah and his followers have a valid complaint? Such a reading strategy allows greater depth and perspective on critical human and ideological matters. However, in this analysis it will be demonstrated that the narrator's use of focalization, aside from the plot, subtly but assertively directs the reader to reject any sense that Korah's complaints are valid.

Aside from narration, dialogue signals a decisive change of focalization by shifting from the narrator-focalizer to the character-focalizer. Fokkelman highlights the

importance of character focalization: 'The most important window on the character's emotional and conceptual perspectives is their own words, at least if they are not deceiving us or their conversation partners' (Fokkelman 1999:144). Within dialogue, characters express overtly or covertly their own perspective on the story, either directly in line with the narrator's view, or to some degree divergent, or in direct conflict. 'The Bible excels in the technique of presenting many points of view and it is this, perhaps more than anything else, that lends drama to its narratives and makes its characters come alive' (Berlin 1994:70). Thus, dialogue often draws the reader into discriminating about the character's position, on either a conscious or subconscious level. Also, Fokkelman (1999:144) insightfully directs readers to compare the words of a character with their actions in order to judge the character's consistency, veracity or hypocrisy.

Another Hebrew stylistic feature signaling a potential focalization change, depending on its semantic usage, is the insertion of the particle הִנֵּה (often translated 'lo' or 'behold'), which is sometimes combined with a verb of perception (i.e. 'to see', or 'to hear'). Berlin suggests this particle highlights the character's perception rather than the narrator's in a manner that is internalized, and thus more dramatic (Berlin 1983:62). Fokkelman adds that often הִנֵּה emphases the inner exuberance of the character: 'The interjection is the signal that the spectator's discovery and amazement are being introduced' (Fokkelman 1990:140).

Every story can be told from varying points of view. The biblical writers control not only what the reader 'sees' but how they see it, from what point of view. This idea is central to accepting that an analysis of point of view is of utmost importance in seeing the narratorial strategies that release information and enact their rhetoric. In some literature,

the author intentionally diffuses the narrative voice to produce overt incongruence, but in the biblical corpus, generally speaking, an 'unlimited omniscient' voice is used to narrate stories. That is, the narrator reveals that they are always able to know, though not compelled to share, all things including the thoughts and feelings of multiple participants in the story (Rhoads et al 1999:39-41). However, biblical narration is predominately scenic in scope with varying changes of perspective (Berlin 1983:46).

Berlin (1983:45) has also observed within the visual aspect of point of view the narrators ability to produce 'a sense of multi-dimensional depth' by moving the point of view in for a close up or far back for a panoramic view. To her, this creates a texture in the narration as opposed to a monotonous flatness. The scope, while not always clearly discernable, in some ways provides a setting as to whether the scene involves only two people in a private conversation, or a room full of people, or an even broader public declaration. The scope may, in some instances, provide some explanation for the content of the narration. Biblical narratives tend to be more scenic in nature producing a public effect that allows readers, strangers really, to be onlookers into affairs that range from intimate to civic. Alter describes this scenic approach under the rubric of event:

> A proper narrative event occurs when the narrative tempo slows down
> enough for us to discriminate a particular scene: to have the illusion of
> the scene's "presence" as it unfolds; to be able to imagine the interaction
> of personages or sometimes personages and groups, together with the
> fright of motivations, ulterior aims, character traits, political, social, or
> religious constraints, moral and theological meanings, borne by their
> speech, gestures, and acts.

<div align="right">(Alter 1981:63)</div>

Alter observes that the scenic scope provides the biblical narrator a great degree of flexibility that is both productive and is aesthetically pleasing for the reader as it

cultivates a multi-dimensional texture. Such multi-dimensional points of view create interest for the reader primarily through ambiguity and irony (Berlin 1983:51). 'The Bible excels in the technique of presenting many points of view and it is this, perhaps more than anything else, that lends drama to its narratives and makes its character come alive' (Berlin 1994:70).

Ultimately, this analysis considers how the narrator chose to express the story, particularly the type and pattern of focalization, which is related to the implied author's overall the selection of materials, the tacit shaping of the narrator's voice.

4.5   Methodology

Having considered the pertinent literary theory related to point of view and the way in which biblical narratologists have appropriated this theory for Old Testament biblical narratives, this study will follow a particular process relevant to the analysis of Numbers 16 and 17. These chapters of Numbers will be divided according to the three major plot movements (Nm 16:1-40; 41-50; 17:1-13) as delineated in the chapter on plot in this work.

First, the ideological norms of the external narrator, which dominate the work, supply the basis from which readers are to contrast and judge the emerging points of view derived from within the story. 'The writers [biblical] choose, in general, an over-arching perspective which commands the narrative and use it with flexibility in accordance with their purposes, the conventions of their time, and the content of different scenes' (Ska 2000:67). This hermeneutical approach derives from the principle that the implied reader should be sensitive to the import or 'sense' of the text (Ricoeur 1976:19-23), rather than

consciously counter-reading (Sternberg 1992:487-488). This ideological norm provides

the benchmark from which to observe variations in focalization.

From this point the narrative of Numbers 16 and 17 shall be analyzed being

sensitive to the features that signal variations in the focalization, particularly character-

focalization. Contra modern novels, Hebrew narratives predominantly utilize character-

focalization to reveal their sometime varying perspectives within dialogue rather than by

narratorial commentary. Finally, the narrative will be critiqued using Rimmon-Kenan's

tripartite categories: perceptual, psychological, and ideological, but primarily in relation

to the narrator. Advancing into the psychological and ideological perspectives of the

participants in the story would encroach on studies in characterization (chapter 5). The

narrator's use of focalization is overwhelmingly the most significant method of signaling

a particular view of the events and participants. This analysis shall focus on the pattern,

selection, and attribution of character focalization.

4.6   A point of view analysis of Numbers 16 and 17

When embarking on a literary analysis of a text, there are several norms, or assumptions

regarding the narrator that require explication because they are endemic to the work. The

narrator inherently colors the story, to greater or lesser degrees, by a singular view of the

world, an evaluation of the events, and an opinion of the characters. Being sensitive to

the narrator's influence on the discourse aids the interpreter in assessing layers of

significance.

The foundational ideological norm for the biblical narrator, requiring no

substantiation, is their positive portrayal of God as a protagonist within the book of

Numbers and the entire Pentateuch. Further to this point, the narrator presumes and

upholds to varying degrees of objectivity, God's ideological authority. This can be

observed in both narratorial comments and the very structure of the narratives. Bar-Efrat

(2004:19) avows that within biblical narration 'God is the absolute and supreme

authority, and this naturally reflects upon the value and importance of His judgments

(although it should not be forgotten that we know what God's attitude is only by the

narrator's authority).' Unless one intentionally reads against the ideological grain of the

Pentateuch, it will be observed innately that the God character's judgments and

perspective are eminently exalted above the rest.

The tone of the narration, that is, the attitude that the writer has towards his

listener (Abrams 2005:227) suggests something about the narrator's strategy in

communicating to the reader.

> The sense in which the term is used in recent criticism is suggested by
> the phrase "tone of voice," as applied to nonliterary speech. The way we
> speak reveals, by subtle clues, our conception of, and the attitude
> toward, the things we are talking about, our personal relationship to our
> auditor, and also our assumptions about the social level, intelligence, and
> sensitivity of that auditor. The tone of a speech can be described as
> critical approving, formal or intimate, outspoken or reticent, solemn or
> playful, arrogant or prayerful, angry or loving, serious or ironic,
> condescending or obsequious, and so on through numberless possible
> nuances of relationship and attitude both to object and auditor.

(Abrams 2005:227)

While common in biblical narratives, the tone of Numbers 16 and 17 on the surface is

rather stunningly matter of fact. The story of Korah's rebellion is expressed in a mostly

dispassionate manner, displaying almost imperceptible emotive commentary despite the

calamitous nature of the events. The narrative begins with an official genealogy of the

antagonists and two sundry verbs to describe their rebellion ('he took' and 'they rose

up'). The story predominately utilizes dialogue followed by narratorial descriptions that generally record outcomes with only the most basic of details. The story is plot driven in a manner that accentuates the action. The dialogue between the conflicting participants is acrimonious. However, the resulting judgments against the rebels are not embellished by graphic descriptions. The unimpassioned tone of the narration possess its own brand of aesthetic power but may also serve to direct the reader away from being drawn into the human tragedy and consequently muster compassion for the rebels, rather than focusing on the contention and judgment of the miscreants.

The semantic and structural features of Hebrew narratives portray a contracted style with few descriptions or epithets, rarely possessing embellishments. The narrator painstakingly avoids overt presentations of psychological depth—all this must be inferred through character focalization. The narration is temporally fast-paced and straightforward. Nevertheless, the candid style of the narration possesses its own kind of power as restraint and understatement, sometimes ironic, can consciously or subconsciously 'enhance the effect of a deeply pathetic or tragic event' (Abrams 2005:128). The Hebrew narrator is utilitarian and tends to introduce only meager amounts of dialogue into the story so as to create complexity, conflict, or suspense. Nonetheless, it is this utilitarian and condensed nature of the narrative that makes all its features significant and any unique features even more noteworthy for interpretation. Comparatively, Hebrew narration does not possess the range of variations in point of view or the overt emotional complexity of modern novels, yet its compressed style affords its own capacity to stimulate readers.

To maximize the effectiveness of the scant dialogue, the narrator often employs either probing questions or powerfully rhetorical questions to plunge the reader into joining the character's process of questioning and making judgments. These rhetorical questions, by their nature, invoke readers to also consider the question by evaluating the actions and motives of the participants; these questions, by consequence, infuse narratives with complexity and depth. 'A rhetorical question is a sentence in the grammatical form of a question which is not asked in order to request information or to invite a reply, but to achieve a greater expressive force than a direct assertion' (Abrams 2005:280). The six rhetorical questions used in Numbers 16 receive no direct verbal response (Nm 16:3b, 8-10a, 10b, 11b, 14b, 22b). Nor does the final direct question of Numbers 17:13 receive an answer, though Frankel (2002:227) does feel the extended laws of Numbers 18 are the response. Nevertheless, these rhetorical questions are actually no questions at all, but devices used to surreptitiously but energetically assert the very issue they query. These assertions are then to be inferred by the readership but experienced more sharply. Though, Sherwood (2002:121) maintains that Moses' rhetorical questions are typically sarcastic, the ironical aspect of Moses' words tends to be highlighted.

Several important observations are derived from attentiveness to the focalization sequence and variations within the narration. Changes in focalization indicate that the narrator is selecting a different manner in which to reveal information. If the narrator 'adopts a different strategy [focalization] at certain points, there must be reasons for this change' (Ska 2000:70). Analyzing the macro pattern of focalization, the order and identity of the focalizer, reveals the covert perspectives held by the narrator. In the

following three tables Numbers 16 and 17 are divided into the major plot movements

according to the quinary scheme adopted for the chapter on plot (Nm 16:1-40; 16:41-50;

17:1-13 NRSV).

Figure 1[1]

Numbers Reference	Focalizer NF-narrator focalizer CF-character focalizer	Focalized (subject or topic)
16:1-3a	NF	Identification of the rebels and their ancestry
16:3b	CF – Rebels	Moses and Aaron's leadership and character
16:4	NF	Reports Moses' prostration
16:5-7	CF – Moses	Instructions to rebels
16:8-11	CF – Moses	Korah's actions and motive
16:12	NF	Dathan and Abiram's summoning
16:12b-14	CF – Dathan and Abiram	Moses' failed leadership
16:15a	NF	Moses' angry response
16:15b	CF – Moses	Prayer of condemnation
16:16-17	CF – Moses	Instructions to Korah
16:18-19	NF	Report of events
16:21	CF – God	Instructions to Moses and Aaron
16:22	CF – Moses and Aaron	Response to God
16:24	CF – God	Instructions to Moses
16:25	NF	Reporting Moses' movements
16:26	CF – Moses	Instructions to the people
16:27	NF	Reporting actions
16:28-30	CF – Moses	Moses' explanation
16:31-33	NF	Report of calamity
16:34	CF – All Israel	Their own psychological state of fear
16:35	NF	Report of further judgment
16:36-38	CF – God	Sacerdotal instructions
16:39-40	NF	Report of instructions followed

This study of focalization in Numbers 16 and 17 sustains Moses as the protagonist

par excellence, whose ideological point of view is to be adopted by the reader as

normative. This is not to suggest that the reader is not to question, imagine, and follow

the vicissitudes of the narrative. But ultimately the pattern of focalization, that is the

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[1] Inconsequential obligatory formulas by the narrator that lack a facet of point of view are not included.

focalization structure (Focalizer column in Figures 1-3), combined with God's affirming actions and judgment, stridently advocates Moses' positive standing within the conflict.

In the opening salvo, the narrator presents the group's complaint as a representative quotation (Nm 16:3). Alter suggests these first words are paramount. 'In any given narrative event, and especially, at the beginning of any new story, the point at which dialogue first emerges will be worthy of special attention, and in most instances, the initial words spoken by a personage will be revelatory….' (Alter 1981:74). This is the only place where Korah's voice is heard within the entire narrative, yet he only communicates as one voice amongst the group. While the complaint is presented powerfully, utilizing a rhetorical question, Korah himself, the named leader, is relegated to participant status. From the outset this denigrates the possibility that the readership will appropriate his ideological viewpoint. This initial collective complaint abruptly launches the insurrection and centers the rebellion against the leadership of Moses and Aaron pitting them against a sizeable contingent of prominent citizens. While the conflict would eventually be divinely resolved, the resolution would be delayed.

God's involvement as a character-focalizer is stalled within the story world, ostensibly for a specific dramatic effect. There are two critical junctures where the narrator does not allow God to focalize where readers may expect. First, right after the rebels laid their complaint, Moses prostrated himself in prayer, but with no retort from God, yet Moses would immediately provide intricate instructions for the censor test (Nm 16:4-5a). Second, Numbers 16:15 reports Moses giving the instructions a second time for the censor challenge, yet again, no words of God are reported prior to these directions. The narrator, by delaying God's appearance into the story confines the conflict to the

human arena and accentuates the reader's process of evaluating motives and points of view, suspending the tension until God's incursion at the climactic moment of judgment.

In each of his focalizations, particularly in this first unit, Moses is actively engaging the conflict by either giving instructions (Nm 16:5-7, 16-17, 26, 28-30, 46), castigating the rebels (Nm 16:8-11, 15b), or interceding with God (Nm 16:22). All of his focalizations possess illocutionary force as speech-acts (Abrams 2005:301), which are emblematic of Moses' role as Israel's leader. Despite being usurped, the intention of his words (illocutionary speech-acts), manifest his unrelenting commitment to lead and fulfill his function as Israel's divinely appointed chieftain. Consequently, the narrator's provision of Moses' speech acts indirectly authenticates his position and by default provides accreditation for his ideological point of view as the human protagonist.

Figure 2

Numbers Reference	Focalizer	Focalized
16:41a	NF	Israel's persistence in grumbling
16:41b	CF – The congregation	Moses and Aaron's perceived complicity
16:42-43	NF	Report of events
16:44-45a	CF – God	Threat of impending judgment
16:45b	NF	Report of Moses and Aaron's intercessory prayer
16:46	CF – Moses	Instructions to Aaron
16:47-50	NF	Report of Aaron's intercession

This second section is launched with a complaint, in representative form, that immediately reinvigorates the conflict, now between the masses and their God appointed leaders. Despite the public and devastating judgments against the rebellion leaders, the people obtusely reengage the conflict. As all of the noteworthy rebels and their followers were previously destroyed, only the people remain—now portrayed without a spokesperson.

In Numbers 16:42 [Heb. Nm 17:1], the dramatic use of הִנֵּה is used by the narrator to intensify the appearance of the glory of Yahweh. Combined with the use of the *piel* tense in the following verb, the interjection is meant to accentuate the visible spectacle of God's glory in the cloud and represents a shift in the point of view to the panoramic event (וְהִנֵּה כִסָּהוּ הֶעָנָן וַיֵּרָא כְּבוֹד יְהוָה). Here the narrator draws the reader into the scene, to stand with the participants and in an existential sense, to view and sense the divine presence and the anticipation of God's wrath. This seemingly small interjection represents the intent of the narrator to divert the perspective of the reader—and it occurs at a climactic point in the narrative (Berlin 1983:62; Bar Efrat 2004:35; Fokkelman 1999:140). Though the insertion of the interjection (הִנֵּה) is commonly omitted in English translations, the shift in point of view that it creates provides considerable texture to this portion of the plot.

Moses' portrayal as leader is further bolstered by his intercessory prayer and his assertiveness in giving instructions for Aaron to intercede with the censor amongst the plague riddled people. Though Aaron and his actions are highlighted by the content of the narration, the fact that he is not character-focalized, and is ascribed no words by the narrator, underscores Moses' role as initiating and superintending over the mediating ritual.

The narrator retains the majority of the focalization throughout this entire narrative unit (Nm 16:41-50). In keeping with most Hebrew narration, the language and description of this terrible plague is notably calm, in comparison to the calamitous nature of the event. This placid narratorial reporting of events serves to restrict the reader from having their sympathies aroused for the rebels and the hapless Israelite community.

Figure 3

Numbers Reference	Focalizer	Focalized
17:1	NF	Obligatory introduction for God
17:2-5	CF – God	Instructions for Moses
17:6-9	NF	Report of events
17:10	CF – God	Instructions for Moses
17:11	NF	Report of Moses' obedience
17:12	CF – The sons of Israel	Their own fear of judgment and death

In Numbers 17, Moses is directed by God to organize and lead a purposeful demonstration but uniquely, Moses is assigned no dialogue whatsoever by the narrator—a surprising convention considering his vocal role in Numbers 16. Rather, in this section, the God character monopolizes the character-focalization and proceeds to marshal a rod test which he successfully consummates. This serves to thoroughly establish God's credibility and, at the same time, manifest his clear election of the Aaronide priesthood (Wenham 1981:139). Also, this change in the pattern of focalization with the narrator and God initiating the plot sequence rather than responding to a fomenting rebellion, signals a variation in the plot movement and type (see chapter 6).

Though Aaron holds a pivotal position in this conflict, the office of high priest, he is virtually unheard in the entirety of Numbers 16 and 17, being attributed no words of his own (although, in Nm 16:22 Aaron is co-joined with Moses in prayer). Aaron's significance as a character is vastly eclipsed by Moses who is assigned abundantly more dialogue throughout the story—though mentioned in Numbers 17 Aaron is not even a participant in the story. Further detracting from Aaron's priority is Numbers 16:23 in which both Moses and Aaron appeal to God, but God only responses to Moses. Again,

when both brothers were assembled before the tent of meeting, it is noteworthy that God proceeds to address Moses only (Nm 16:43-44). Clearly a pecking order is established and Moses is prioritized.

At the root of this conflict is Korah's desire for the priesthood, presumably he actually wants to be the high priest (Milgrom 1989:133), yet strangely Aaron is minimized as a character, particularly by the narrator's focalization strategy. Though directed by Moses, Aaron's actions are constituted as a precursor in halting the plague (Nm 16:47), yet his voice is muted; in fact, Aaron's silence in the book of Numbers is almost paradigmatic. The Aaronide priesthood is stridently vindicated by God's dramatic judgments against the rebels and the miraculous blossoming of Aaron's rod, yet the person of Aaron is seemingly eschewed, and in contrast to the significance of his position, he is noticeably ignored. Likewise, while the role and function of the high priest is paramount in Israel's sacerdotal life, the personage holding the position evidently possesses little prominence; seemingly the position is central, the man is not. These details regarding Aaron and character focalization will contribute to an analysis of his character (see chapter five).

Nomination, or the naming of characters, is also widely agreed to signal the narrator's ideological point of view and is sometimes a critical expression of the narrator's perspective toward specific characters (Berlin 1983:59-61, Sternberg 1985:39). The noteworthy nomination in this story is that of the Israelites. The people of Israel (variously called, "all Israel", "the congregation of the sons of Israel", or "the sons of Israel") are collectively focalizers only three times in the entire narrative, once in each of the three major sections. In the first section, the people (וְכָל־יִשְׂרָאֵל) observe the

judgments against the rebellion leaders and flee in panic declaring their own fear of being

swallowed up (Nm 16:34). On the following day, the people are ascribed with a lengthy

nomination, 'the congregation of the sons of Israel' (כָּל־עֲדַת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל), probably

to ironically highlight their intended prominence as a people in contrast to their

inscrutable attitude (Nm 16:41). Such nomination sometimes includes criticism rather

than bland or distinctive identification (Bar Efrat 2004:39). Within their complaint, the

people blame Moses for the death of the rebels who they incredulously call 'the Lord's

people'

(עַם יְהוָה - Nm 16:41b). Their evaluation of the situation must be judged to be a

misinterpretation considering the sound affirmation of Moses' perspective by both the

form and content of the narrative. The last focalization of the people (בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל)

takes up where the first expression of fear began. Here they anticipate their demise and

wonder if the entire community will perish (Nm 17:12b-13). Though it may be that the

variation in nomination is only stylistic (Nm 16:34 being JE and the two subsequent

examples are P), the final redactor(s) allowed these various nominations for the Israelites.

The ascribed irony derives from the situation of these uniquely assembled people who

were evidently more loyal to their rebellion leaders, than to their divinely appointed

leaders. These nominations may subtly expose the narrator's unenthusiastic sentiment

towards the people, without the need for overt narratorial statements or judgments.

Having considered the narrator's focalization, several significant features have

arisen that can be explicated according to Rimmon-Kenan's grid of focalization.

Regarding ideological focalization, the claims and complaints of rebels are trumped, not

only by the content of the narrative, but by the strategies of focalization employed by the

narrator. Korah was ascribed no solo voice within the story and his ideological claims of Moses' incompetence and corruption were given faint potentiality by the narrator. The narrator consigned Dathan and Abiram to a moderate amount of free undirected discourse in which they voice their ideological complaint against Moses and Aaron. Speaking in a unified voice their accusation and ideological point of view is that Moses' mission was a failure and his leadership pretentious. In reporting the response of Dathan and Abiram the narrator provided an apparent third party report of the antagonist's words. Rather than using a narratorial summary of Dathan and Abiram's words, the narrator used a quotation format that sharpens their defiance and, combined with their refusal to obey Moses' summons, taints the audience's perception of these characters and in this manner diminishes the viability of their ideological viewpoint.

In this acrimonious narrative, the narrator upholds the ideology of the major protagonists, God and Moses, by assigning to them the most narrative time as compared to the modest amount of dialogue accorded to the antagonists. Apart from the content of the story, in particular God's wrathful judgments in response to the rebellion, the ideological norms of the protagonists are soundly acclaimed by the focalization strategy which highlighted the favored characters and their ideology by sheer quantity of words.

The perceptual point of view in Numbers 16 and 17 tends to be panoramic, seeming to encapsulate the whole community, or at least large groups of witnesses throughout the narrative, as there are no setting or content clues to suggest a scene's retreat to an enclosed area or a delimitation in the number of the participants. The flexibility of external focalization is well executed in Numbers 16 and 17 creating a sense

that the matters are quite public, which in an indistinct manner expresses the thorough going nature of the community's rebellion.

As psychological focalization delves rather directly into the characterization of the participants only a few relevant statements will be made that will later resource the chapter on characterization in this study. This chapter is concerned with the specific signals in the narrator's focalization strategy that intimates a specific perspective rather than attempting to prematurely draw conclusions about the character.

The narrator's presentation of Korah and his followers provides a minimal interior view of these characters that are mediated from a distance through representative dialogue (Nm 16:3). Korah's voice is perceptible only conjoined with the chorus of his assembled malcontents. Only through the opening genealogy and Moses' constant referral to Korah as the rebellion leader does he maintain that status. Readers are not allowed to sustain Korah's point of view, to empathize entirely with his complaint, or to understand clearly his motivations from his own mouth. O'Neill (1992:342) asserts that when a character is the focalizer, that not only is the reader's attention drawn to them but also their sympathies. Thus, it stands to reason that the narrator is ambivalent to allow Korah to 'personally' vocalize his own perspective in order to avoid arousing reader's sympathies and likewise counter his efforts to portray Korah as the emblem of rebellion. More words, however, are permitted of Dathan and Abiram whose statements tend to galvanize the sentiments of readers against them. In this case, their perspective and complaint actually aid the narrative agenda in portraying the rebels as holding a false and scandalous view of their situation (O'Neill 1992:342). Similarly with Korah, without being allowed to sympathize with Korah's point of view, readers are barely allowed to

evaluate the plausibility of Korah's ideological complaint; yet his emotive drive for power is revealed through Moses, the perceived truthful hero. The absence of Korah's individuated voice gravely limits any possibility of readers empathizing with his rebellion.

Because the narrator chose to let Moses express his view of Korah's assault on the priesthood, consequently, the reader would naturally tend to sympathize with Moses' disposition; 'this way of narration expresses the narrator's empathy for the character whose point of view is adopted' (Bar-Efrat 2004:39; cf. Yamasaki 2006:94). Readers encounter direct statements from Moses and consequently a higher level of attachment to the character. Also, Moses' widely established role as the protagonist (hero) character in the book of Numbers increases the reader's acrimony directed towards Korah.

In closing, point of view theory definitely focuses on the narrator and the perspective that is put forward—of the world, participants, and events. This chapter highlighted the narrator's focalization strategy that revealed the prominence through Moses' words and role, such that Moses' ideological perspective was entirely espoused by the narrator to the readership. Certainly, the data from this chapter will be infused into the chapters connected to both, plot and characterization. Point of view provides texture and isolates the perspective and strategies of the narrator that are, on varying levels, at work in the discourse of any story and will normally be at play, at least subconsciously, in the mind of the reader.

5   CHARACTERIZATION IN NUMBERS 16 AND 17

The diverse characters of biblical narratives provide the building blocks for the dramatic stories that communicate Israel's theological history. Characters are always necessary to drive plots forward, to create narrative tension and to provide the human actions that create relevant associations for the reader. From the onset, it must be conceded that the writers of Old Testament narrative were far more attentive to plot lines and theological themes rather than developing thoroughly rounded, psychological characters. Nonetheless, a symbiotic relationship exists between plot and characterization in stories, with plot informing character development, and vice versa (Powell 1990:51). Despite lean exposure to many biblical characters, readers naturally envision and relate to their personhood, evaluating their actions, and idealizing the essence of each literary person (Iser 1978:21). This chapter will espouse a character theory that attempts to balance the formalist and reader-response theories of characterization. From this, a paradigm for evaluating characters from textual indicators will be applied to the characters of Numbers 16 and 17.

The historical reality of the events and personages of Numbers 16 and 17 remains arguable and indeterminate. As previously discussed in chapter 2, the possibility of Israel's sojourn in the wilderness remains a prospect—given the circumstantial evidence surrounding Israel's presence in Egypt. However, even the basic details of the trek across the wilderness have not been corroborated by archaeologists or historians. Consequently, the historical actuality of these characters can only be maintained by an ideological trust in the veracity of the biblical account. Apart from this, there is no way to scientifically verify the historical existence of these characters. Further, even if these characters

existed as historical figures, there is no way to evaluate the accuracy of the literary portrayal created by the author(s) of the biblical text. Therefore, this narrative critical analysis is focused on the purported textual witness to these characters without being able to establish or affirm their historical actuality. For the purpose of this study, these caricatures of biblical 'persons' are abstractions that exist in the minds of readers.

In Numbers 16 and 17, seven individual characters (God, Moses, Aaron, Korah, Dathan, Abiram, On) and two groups (the rebel followers of Korah, and the collective group of Israelites) come to the fore of this wilderness narrative. Three of the individual characters are richly developed outside the present narrative (God, Moses, and Aaron). Korah, who is only marginally developed as a character, becomes an archetype for being an insidious rebellion leader in Israel, but figures in no other biblical narratives. On, possesses nothing but a name and other than being aligned with the rebellion he is assigned no character features or agency. In contrast, the narrator exposes the obstinacy of Dathan and Abiram with rancorous indirect dialogue with Moses. Before examining each of these characters in detail, a theoretical framework for evaluating characters will be proposed. While the conventional goal of understanding characters is to recognize their contribution to the plot, yet ultimately their explication contributes to a comprehensive perception of the broader story.

Because Hebrew narratives seldom directly espouse character traits, most often they must be construed from the dialogue, the actions of the character, or the intricacies of the plot, or the narrator's point of view. Amit (2001:74) makes a distinction between direct and indirect characterization: 'Direct characterization is provided by the narrator or by one of the persons in the story, while indirect characterization is the product of an

analysis of the person's discourse and his/her actions and conduct.' Biblical characterization is almost entirely of the indirect variety. Indirect characterization requires attentive and judicious analysis of the character's activities and words to determine their internal values, motives and drives, as well as the perspective of the narrator, often subtly infused into the story.

5.1   Character theory in literary conception

The 'realist' school of thought that dominated the first half of the twentieth century centered on the fundamental idea that literary characters are based on an anterior notion of a person; that a person either existed in reality or in the mind of the writer and their literary portrayal of the character was a mimetic, and usually inferior, reproduction. Though a 'mimetic adequacy' may be achieved it was not felt that the literary world was part of reality but was construed as a parallel existence operating in a descriptive manner (Docherty 1983:xi). The realists see characters as individuals or personalities who transcend the text (persons) — their characters are ontological, 'living' entities that possess shape and personhood beyond the text. Yet this approach strongly asserted authorial intention as the pathway to meaning with little consideration of the role of the reader.

Concurrently, several important formalists and structuralists such as: Claude Bremond (1963), Algirdas Greimas (1966), Roland Barthes (1970), and Tzvetan Todorov (1971) predominately viewed characters as mere functionaries in plots, entirely subordinating the analysis of characters. Chatman (1972:57) defines the movement's conception of character as 'the notion that characters are to be conceived as *actants* or

participants, rather than real beings — to avoid what the structuralists take to be a mistaken indulgence in considerations of "psychological essence".' This notion certainly was not new as even Aristotle tended to subordinate character to plot (Aristotle 1984:2320). But for structuralists, when characterization did figure into plot, it 'is seen to function in terms of the ordinary laws of psychological causality: the laws of love, hate, jealousy, and other emotions' (Hochman 1985:29). Many structuralists did not acknowledge personhood in characters but viewed them as literary products bound by the words that describe them having in no sense an ontological existence. 'For the structuralists, character is there to carry forward the action or (for the less radical) to amplify the theme' (Hochman 1985:21). Characters, then, became subordinated to plot in structuralist theories because of the presupposition that characters act as servants to the storyline.

Character theory was further stretched by post-modernity's new approach to language, which included a transfer of authority from the author to the reader (Bach 1993:62). The more radical of its practitioners have a tendency towards deconstruction; 'postmodernist writers not only challenge the cogency of character as a category but actively work to dismantle it as an operative element in their stories' (Hochman 1985:14). For example, Docherty's reader response model 'grants the reader the possibility of escape from a fixed selfhood into an existence as a series of subjectivities, always in first-person (and hence direct) experience of the environment' (Docherty 1983:xvi). Of course, the common argument against reader oriented approaches is two-fold — the loss of the author's rhetorical import and perspective, as well as the potential disconnection from the historical import of the narrative, if so infused by the author. The postmodern

approach to characterization is not to be satisfied with description of a character only, but to move the reader from position to position and to inform the reader emotively (Docherty 1983:8). It is further necessary to distinguish between postmodern writing which intentionally uses strategies that resist stability and description, and postmodern reading strategies that intentionally apply their presuppositions of suspicion that manifests variability.

A sensible middle course, best represented by Chatman (1978:119), accepts elements from both views: characters (personages) that originate in the textual world (words) but at the same time naturally become 'open' constructs in the minds of readers. The shaping of characters is founded on the textual indicators (primarily details supplied by the narrator, and the character's actions and dialogue found in the text) but is intuitively taken up as a task of the reader as they instinctively attribute characters with traits and idiosyncrasies. This reading approach adopts a stance of acceptance, discovery and cogency rather than distrust and incongruence. Furthermore, the approach of Chatman provides a balance or equality between the author and the reader in the process of interpretation, accepting the interplay of language and reader in the hermeneutical process. Burnett (1993:3) interprets the gospel narratives in a similar fashion: 'Any theory of characterization for the Gospels must consider both the textual indicators and the reading process.' Burnett's approach likewise acknowledges the primacy of the biblical text, and also accepts the expected and organic activity of readers without alienating the author or the text from the hermeneutical task.

The role of the reader has been a touchstone of biblical hermeneutics for the past few decades and has particular application to any theory of characterization. The

147

fundamental debate often centers on the locus of meaning: in the author, the text, or the reader. For the purpose of this study, it is conceded that the existence of an author and a text implies a reader, and that readers will be engaged in the ordinary processes of trying to understand the textual communication. Certainly the author's intention shapes the rhetorical function and the selection of the text. Nonetheless, the reader has only mediated access to the author, yet direct access to the text. While the text is the focal point of the reader, the reader's mind will always be at work: observing data and points of interest in the text, comparing and evaluating the importance of the data, and then applying a hermeneutic to the produce an interpretation (Berlin 1993:145). When reading a story where a previously known character is involved, readers already have a sense of who that character is, how the character will tend to act, and how they will response in given circumstances. Not only will readers have an intellectual knowledge about that character, they will normally have a visceral opinion of each character, either conscious or subconscious. 'Sometimes the characters arouse our sympathy, sometimes our revulsion, but we are never indifferent to them. We want to know them, to see how they act within their environment, and to understand their motives and desires' (Bar-Efrat 2004:47). Furthermore, readers insist on individualizing characters and bringing their actions into judgment (Nohrnberg 1991:61). While readers will instinctively assess the ethical quality of the story's characters, and a mature reading should account for the social, cultural, and worldview setting in the time of the participants. In approaching biblical narratives, which commonly possess a rhetoric that is intent on providing ethical instruction through stories, readers can see characters being developed, at least in a limited sense, and these characterizations will play a role in understanding a text

148

(Wenham 2000:11). While interpreters must examine the text for meaning, fully appreciating communication theory means that the common sense activities of readers, which were anticipated by the author, should be factored into interpretation.

Chatman's work provides an approach that appreciates the textual indicators in the biblical text as the source from which readers base their speculations about literary characters; but also gives credit to the usual imagining of readers who try to understand, conceptualize, and relate to the lives of the characters. A positive appreciation of the author and text, keeps the reader from falling into sweeping subjectivism—as exemplified in the psychoanalytic reading strategy of Norman Holland (1975:115). Nevertheless, having established a basic hermeneutical reading approach to narratives, there remain several auxiliary issues in character theory that need to be surveyed in order to nuance this paradigm of character assessment.

5.2   Issues and obstacles to literary characterization

An examination of works on character theory quickly uncovers numerous problems and obstacles for critics who wish to give descriptions to literary characters. In this section, several of the current issues in characterization will be surveyed and measured in relation to their application to biblical narratives. Furthermore, several seeming barriers to characterization will be examined in an attempt to promote a view of characterization that is productive for biblical characters.

Characterization theory applies rather evenly between real historical characters and fictional literary characters. With historical characters, the author uses his knowledge of a living, or previously living, human to create some level of caricature

based on their knowledge. With fictional characters, the author draws on their own mental image of the character to create their portrayal. While the subjects are different for the author, to the reader, there is little distinction as both types of literary personages pre-existed in the author's mind. Docherty (1983:44) asserts that the manner in which readers actualize literary persons is the same process for the real person: 'the full congruity between the way we perceive people in literature and the way we perceive them in life, with all the possibilities of disjunction and synthesis that are available in the one domain being possible in the other.' Biblical characters are literary characters, and be they actual or fictional, the reader's access to them is only obtained by the literary description provided by the narrator. If readers presume that real human characters stand behind the literary portrayal, they have no way of knowing how accurate is the biblical writer's literary portrayal of the character (Bar-Efrat 2004:48). Remembering that in biblical stories, the narrator has produced a literary portrayal of a character, choosing their material for pedagogical, rhetorical and theological purposes, rarely provides for the inclusion of fully developed psychological characters.

Defining literary characters should always be provisional and partial recognizing three foundational problems that are out of the reader's control: (1) the overall selection of materials, (2) the aims of the author, rarely being directly biographical and (3) the complexity of human make up and behavior. Each of these issues surrounding the narrator's provision of character indicators in some way inhibits a fair and full assessment of character.

Story selection by the narrator largely controls which character traits are highlighted or ignored. Most biblical narratives bypass direct treatments of human

150

characters in order to superimpose divine action. Notably Old Testament characters tend

to be scrutinized in difficult circumstances, to the exclusion of others which supplies an

inadequate sampling of material. When biblical narratives do emphasize character traits

— either negative or positive — they may even overemphasize a trait due to its inclusion,

and the consequent exclusion of counter examples. Thus, considering character

assessment and description as a provisional task will avoid the inscrutable attempt to

produce an exact and entire portrayal that exemplifies the actual character, historical or

fictional.

The reader's awareness of the author's rhetorical aims helps to signal their goals

toward portraying the characters in a particular story. For example, Von Rad's premise is

that the character and activity of God, theology itself, is the primary concern of biblical

import. Therefore, addressing Moses he writes:

> All stories about Moses bear testimony to God. In them men are not
> presented in any ideal fashion; on the contrary they are realistically shown
> in every aspect of their human nature… If we realize this, we are less likely
> to make the mistake of imagining that the men about whom these stories
> were written were really important actors in them.

> (Von Rad 1960:9)

Certainly, other thematic and theological matters, beyond the character and activity of

God, were at issue for the biblical writer and these also tend to supersede character

development. Wenham (2000:3) concludes that biblical narratives 'do have a didactic

purpose, that is, they are trying to instil both theological truths and ethical ideals into

their readers.' With the biblical author's direct attention focused on theology and ethics,

character development becomes an only ancillary byproduct of biblical narratives, but

characterization is not entirely negated. When biblical narrators do highlight character's

151

they rarely do so with direct narration, but choose to expose traits through revealing the character's own words and actions leaving the reader to make final judgments. For in some cases, the narrator does shift the reader's attention from the plot onto the ethics and inner world of a character.

While the field of psychology also has a variety of approaches dealing with the complex nature of character theory and personality, there are some abiding notions that will enhance our view of literary characters. Arnold (1982:158) states: 'Character is the indivisible individual distinctiveness of a person (more precisely, of a *self*), which is exhibited in certain modes of individual experience and experiencing; these modes are organized as wholes and are subject to change, but they persist in essence.' Three aspects of this definition are noteworthy for a literary theory of character: indivisibility, change, and persistence. Characters do need to be viewed holistically, as unities. 'The notion of character cannot be divided into elements conceivable in isolation; it has to be grasped as a whole. It is an objective unity' (Arnold 1982:158). People exist as a blend of traits that coexist, and seemingly, compete at various times for expression in behaviour. Further, it is common experience that people change, at various rates and to varying degrees over time. Literary characters who demonstrate internal change within a story are considered 'dynamic' while those that do not change are called 'static.' While some narratives present only a snap shot of time, others cover decades, and readers may perceive shifts in behavior, requiring our theory of characterization to tolerate such refinements. Some biblical characters such as Moses receive copious narrative attention that spans their entire life; thus readers are able to detect growth or denigration, limited to the degree of revelation provided by the author. Last, these modes or traits persist, to varying degrees,

152

in persons and become apparent because people are creatures of habit and follow patterns of thought and behavior. What readers tend to label as a trait is described by Chatman (1978:126) as a 'relatively stable or abiding personal quality' that notes the patterns of behaviour in a character and allows the reader to shape a mental image or construct and to predict how this character may behave or what actions and choices they will make in the future.

Narratives cannot account for the full complexity of human behavior or characteristics. Even if a reader has established a trustworthy listing of a characters personal traits that is accurate and representative of the person, they have to acknowledge that these traits will dynamically interact with one another, in varying circumstances. Some traits will take priority over others, depending on the situation, which are always different, making prediction an ambiguous task. However, if this inconsistency becomes a pattern, it then becomes a feature of character. Any theory of character that lists traits must assume that human behavior cannot be fully captured or accounted for in an adjectival list of traits. Consequently, literary characters should be viewed as more fragmentary or evanescent, lacking a holism that is naively hoped for by some readers. Docherty (1983:5) points out the problem that characterization actually involves constructing the characters 'inner world' rather than their 'external world' and it is this psychological task of the reader that has been considered suspect in modern scholarship.

Ultimately, readers have to be satisfied with literary portraits, caricatures that are on several grounds, both theoretically and practically — partial or limited. Furthermore, as humans, we have inward knowledge of ourselves, a particular kind of knowledge.

> No matter what image we have of our own identity — as the secret, central
> ego lurking behind a gallery of social personae, as the ghost in the machine,

as a pattern, as a flux, as a hard, stable core within the flux — we still think of it as unique, isolate, discrete. From this we extrapolate a similar sense of the characters of others; they may be private and unknowable but they are like us at least in this respect.

(Harvey 1965:31)

While humans have an inward knowledge of themselves, when functioning as readers they can only extrapolate knowledge of literary others from contexts, plots, and discourse — a type of knowledge that is altogether different than self-knowledge. Readers are only able to garner the evidence of character traits from textual indicators and then proceed to ruminate about the inner world of literary characters.

There is an emotive aspect to character theory that is often overlooked in non-reader oriented approaches to character. Readers tend to relate to characters that are developed with their humanity exposed in the story, with their flaws, fears and dreams revealed, even though the reader's evaluation of a given character may still be negative or positive. 'Affinity with a character thus depends to some extent on the degree to which that character is "subjectified" — made into a subject, given an active human consciousness. The more subjective information we have about a character, as a rule, the greater our access to that persona and the more powerful the affinity' (Lanser 1981:206). As a result, assessing characters is more than just a two dimensional project of determining whether a character is patently good or bad. However, the good or bad dichotomy is often a normal emotive response of the attuned reader. There are two ways to assess a character positively or negatively. First, the narrator's point of view tends to place people in a light that makes the reader either empathize or sympathize positively, or conversely feel antipathy towards the character. This evaluative point of view is present because 'the judgment of the narrator is constantly present in the text and presentation of

154

the characters, of the world, things or ideas, is his. There is not a bit of the text that has

not been shaped by the particular perspective of the author' (Marguerat & Bourquin

1999:68). Addressing ancient biography, Blenkinsopp (2004:140) states: 'These are of

course decisions and deeds selected by the observer and commentator as significant in

keeping with presuppositions and prejudices that the biographer brings to the task; there

is no such thing as an *innocent* interpretation of a life or of anything else.' The second,

and hermeneutically problematic, is the manner in which biblical readers evaluate

characters based on their own values, worldview and religious beliefs, rather than ancient

cultural standards and the ethical import envisioned in the Hebrew Bible. Therefore,

biblical readers require significant exposure and conditioned reading of the Old

Testament and its historical and cultural environs to reconstruct, at least approximately,

the ancient setting. Considered in the light of their own setting, characters that transgress

the internal regulations of the Hebrew Bible and expected virtues of their own

community will tend to be viewed negatively by the author. Having a positive or

negative view of a character however, does not develop traits, but inheres for the reader a

sentiment towards the character.

Assigning trait names, or descriptors, to characters inherently possesses

shortcomings. Some linguists and deconstructionists object to labeling people with trait

names because these names are but symbols that do not correspond to the actual object of

their description. This is to say that trait naming or nomination, is limited because it is

language bound. Phelan (1989:214) concedes that language fails to capture the

inexplicable and multifarious nature of humans; nevertheless he is not deterred from

trying. This linguistic shortcoming is a philosophic objection that has some merit,

reminding us of the imprecision of labeling, but this objection does not invalidate the attempt to do so. Chatman (1978:124) and Burnett (1993:5) affirm the need to construct character portraits from the elements within the text and accept the limitations of language and culture. 'A character, then, is constructed by the reader from indicators that are distributed along the textual continuum. Traits are inferred by the reader from the indicators' (Burnett 1993:5). Garvey (1978:73) has suggested the use of modalizers indicating degrees or qualifications to trait naming (i.e. 'he is patient *when not under stress'*) which respects the variable nature of human behavior and resists the modernist bias towards reductionism. Here the acceptance of Docherty's practice is helpful as he suggests that initial adjectives about characters should be continually modified or qualified as part of the reader's evaluative process (Docherty 1983:11).

As Old Testament narratives are meager in their provision of textual indicators for characterization, all pieces of information should be taken seriously (Fokkelman 1999:68, 69). Amit (2001:74) recognizes two basic types of indicators; direct and indirect, with the Old Testament relying heavily on the second. Consequently, characterization must be judiciously garnered from a variety of textual indicators. In particular, a character's actions within the plot may provide substantive material in relation to their values and motives. While circumspect treatment of these indicators is necessary, they often contribute indicators for trait naming; 'a trait may be implied both by one-time (or non-routine) actions [or]...by contrast, habitual actions [that] tend to reveal the character's unchanging or static aspect' (Rimmon-Kenan 2002:61). While habitual patterns are easy to distinguish and describe, one-time actions require greater sagacity, yet at the same time they can be astoundingly insightful into a person's world. 'Although one-time action

156

does not reflect constant qualities, it is not less characteristic of the character. On the contrary, its dramatic impact often suggests that the traits revealed are qualitatively more crucial than the numerous habits which represent the character's routine' (Rimmon-Kenan 2002:61). This presents a theoretical obstacle that requires prudent assessment but, authors assume that readers do possess some ability to extrapolate from their own life experience.

Readers are in an equitable position to interpolate character traits on the principle of mimetic association. The biblical world is in many ways analogous to the human worlds of its readership. Harvey (1965:12) promotes a mimetic view (rejecting the autonomy view) of literary works because of the analogous points of contact found in real human experiences. He rejects the position that the moral or ethical stance of humans is the same across time and culture, and he examines the differences from a philosophical basis, the concepts of: time, identity, freedom and causality (Harvey 1965:100-149). Harvey feels that morality, as a basis for analyzing character, is subject to wide ranging shifts due to influences of culture and time. While this variable is more detrimental for some literary works, it is not so problematic for biblical literature which internally provides extensive cultural information of the time, and a complete framework of religious/moral understanding (*Weltanschauung*). This provides biblical readers with an approximate ethical baseline to evaluate the behavior of biblical characters.

A proper name is essential in giving unity and individual existence to a biblical character. While 'a name confers being, even status, without defining personality,' according to Sternberg (1985:330), a name is what binds a literary personage together in one image and becomes the referent for that character. Commonly, the etymology of

157

many biblical names has plot implications even beyond suggesting indications of character. In this way names can be more prophetic of action or function, rather than only describing inherent qualities. While proper names are relevant at specific junctions in exegesis, no such junctions inheres the text of Numbers 16 and 17.

In contrast to firm individuation, the theory of 'interdividuality', first made popular by Todorov (1971), evaluates individual characters based on their relationships and interactions with others. 'Character conceived in individual terms is inadequate for biblical character, which involves an essential relationship to others, an "interdividuality" of the sort described by Bakhtin' (McCracken 1993:29). The interdividual is seen as a being in relationship and contact with others and not merely an isolated self, possessing certain static qualities on their own. In a similar way, Robbins (1996:78) applies social theory to the evaluation of biblical characters of the 1st century as 'dyadic' personalities, that is, characters who understand their selfhood in relation to others. This collectivist approach acknowledges, as opposed to modern individualist societies, that ancient persons found themselves within a social network from which they functioned and received their self-perception (Malina & Neyrey 1996:227). The concept of dyadic personality is indispensible for a literary assessment of characters in the ancient world, as societies were decidedly more collectivist. McCracken's view of characterization, dispelling the idea of characters possessing traits as an entity, sees characters as fluid and dialogic: 'fluctuating roles, formed in response to another and expressed in anticipatory words' (McCracken 1993:31). McCracken's concept of 'interdividuality' helps to highlight, human networks and the basic social and family status of characters in conjunction with their ongoing relationships. Harvey (1965:52) has also accorded great

158

value in assessing characters in this way: 'By far the most important of contexts is the web of human relationships in which any single character must be enmeshed. So much of what we are can only be defined in terms of our relations with other people....' Albeit an important aspect of character, if too much is afforded to the interdividual, the person can be entirely lost. Aspects of 'interdividuality' contribute aptly to character theory but as Volf asserts, does not displace individual characterization. 'Persons are not relations; persons stand in relations that shape their identity' (Volf 1996:180). Unfortunately, the possibility of applying 'interdividuality' with consistent depth in biblical narratives is minimal because few portrayals of two or more well developed characters in relationship exist, though Moses and Aaron provide a productive example in this study.

Nonetheless, relational and interactive influences that affect behavior and ultimately character are profoundly evident in the socially well-structured world of the Old Testament. 'Having a character, in the Bible, means having a place in the elongated ethnic history. But the effect of having such a place, namely the conscription of the character by the history, makes any one character that much less self-sovereign or centered on his own identity….In the Bible much of fate is collective' (Nohrnberg 1991: 62). Particularly with Old Testament Israel, each character's personal history is intertwined with their place in Israel's history, their tribal standing, and their own family status and functionality. The conception of 'interdividuality' helps provide indicators for conceiving character traits and also aids interpreters in contending against the modern inclination to heightened individualism.

Biblical writers did not conceive or portray their characters with the same emotional or psychological depth as modern writers. 'Thus, what appears to modern

159

critics as a minimum of characterization may have been read in maximal terms by contemporary auditors and readers' (Burnett 1993:14, 15). Analyzing Old Testament characters requires a specialized understanding of the broader patterns of Hebrew characterization. Whether intentional or not, biblical scholars have been appropriating of literary theory even before the modern period, but in recent decades, there has been a more intentional adaptation of modern literary theory to biblical studies and hermeneutics, particularly in the field of Old Testament studies.

5.3   Adaptation of literary theory by Old Testament scholarship

Biblical criticism in the modern era has maintained an affinity for literary criticism because of the comparable nature of their respective tasks. Following the wave of 'New Criticism' in the field of literature, in the 1940's and 1950's, several strands of biblical criticism (e.g. canonical criticism, structuralism, rhetorical and narrative criticism) have re-embraced the text as the focal point for analysis (Barton 1996:140-141). Old Testament scholars, such as: Alter (1981), Berlin (1983), Sternberg (1985), Fokkelman (1999), Bar Efrat (2004), and others, have produced academic volumes devoted to the adaptation of literary theory to biblical texts, making significant contributions to biblical studies. The following section will survey the work of biblical narrative critics related to characterization to refine and determine the best practices to be applied to the characters of Numbers 16 and 17.

Berlin (1983:23) appropriates the common literary categories for the function of characters in a story and applies them to biblical narratives. She sees characterization not

in kinds, but in degree of characterization: that is, the amount of information revealed about a character:

> One might think of them as points on a continuum: 1) the agent, about whom nothing is known except what is necessary for the plot; the agent is a function of the plot or part of the setting; 2) the type, who has a limited and stereotyped range of traits, and who represents the class of people with these traits; 3) the [full fledged] character, who has a broader range of traits (not all belonging to the same class of people), and about whom we know more than is necessary for the plot.

> (Berlin 1983:32)

The inadequacy of such categorizing is quickly demonstrated when trying to apply it to Hebrew narratives, which are sparse in data, yet richly subtle. Many biblical characters fall between the categories. In a similar vein, Rimmon-Kenan (2002:40) criticized Forster's classification (flat vs. round characters) saying: 'The dichotomy is highly reductive, obliterating the degrees and nuances found in the actual works of narrative fiction.' Consequently, the value of categorizing types of character is limited for evaluation and analysis, but may have some value in providing definition and description at points.

Alter (1981:116-117) notes a hierarchy of confidence in ascribing character traits which he calls a 'scale of means'. He observes three different levels of confidence. The lowest level relies on the observations of a character's actions or appearance, and therefore requires the reader to make inferences holding diminished certainty. With little evidence, the reader is required to ponder: at times, conflicting possibilities, and the ambiguous internal state of a character in a given story. The second level, holding potential for more reliable conclusions is found in direct speech by the character, and inward speech. And the highest level of confidence is found in the direct statements of

the narrator about the character. This assumes that the biblical narrator is fully trustworthy, yet Sternberg (1985:236) and Fokkelman (1999:65, 66) caution that the narrator may occasionally practice deception or misdirection for the sake of narrative drama and tension. Nonetheless, where text and context do not suggest misdirection, Alter's scale of means grants more effectual criteria for the reader to judge the level of assurance in the final assessment of character.

Sternberg sees character portraits in five dimensions: physical, social, singular or concretizing (including name), moral and ideological, and psychological in a wide sense. His theory of creating open portraits, following Chatman, allows for active supposition on the part of the reader. 'So reading a character becomes a process of discovery, attended by all the biblical hallmarks: progressive reconstruction, tentative closure of discontinuities, frequent and sometimes painful reshaping in face of the unexpected, and intractable pockets of darkness to the very end' (Sternberg 1985:323, 324). Sternberg's approach is more highly attuned to the complexities and layers of human makeup as well as the literary features that make character assessment and trait naming a sophisticated and sometimes knotty process.

> Even when one or more epithets are given, they turn out less than helpful and sometimes downright misleading in relation to subsequent disclosures. Not that such epithets are unreliable — at least when they come from the narrator — but that even at their most reliable they do not go far and deep enough. They yield a partial picture of the figure and we must round it out by our own efforts, usually at the most essential (intriguing, problematic) spots.

> (Sternberg 1985:327)

Therefore, because of the limits of language (epithets), every character sketch falls short by its own words to express the depth and completeness of characters. Bringing together

epithets crams personality into a few adjectives that cannot account for the richness and full complexity of persons, and therefore, Sternberg also allows greater license for readers to engage the characters with their imagination — to creatively envision internal drives, motives and desires.

Beyond consideration of the surface indicators in the text should be some accounting for the narrator's point of view, and consideration of plot, as developed in chapter 4 of this study. The narrator imposes, usually quite covertly, his opinion of the characters or their actions within the selection and presentation of materials, even aside from any narratorial commentary. Likewise, the events of the story and the actions or non-actions of the characters, may posit features of character. Consequently, readers who are attentive to these operations become aware of these further indicators of character that are not always accounted.

The biblical narrator tends to be concerned with human action and leaves much of its evaluation of characters up to the reader, rather than imparting their own ontological descriptions of human entities. Most Old Testament narratives tend to be driven by plot with a secondary concern for characterization with a more fluid view of human action prioritizing conduct over static existence.

5.4   A paradigm for evaluating Old Testament characters

As developed from a theoretical vantage, literary portrayals of a person cannot provide an exact, holistic representation of a historical character. The problem is similar in application to fictive characters, as the reader tries to reconstruct the author's image of the character. This problem is only averted for radical reader-response critics who

163

suggest the only portrayal that matters is the one within the mind of the reader. Nonetheless, it is feasible to assemble textual indicators to produce at least a partial and provisional description of a character. At the same time, the process of evaluating a character's actions aside from trait naming and description contributes to the evaluation of both plot and worldview. What is proposed here is a view of characterization that is both judicious and nuanced, without the compulsion to rigidly ascribe static holism to a character, yet recognizes the importance of evaluation and reflection that is contributory by nature. While the task of trait description and character evaluation is fraught with some indeterminacy, it is an organic activity of readers to create constructs of biblical characters — namely assembling trait characteristics attached to a nominated character.

The paradigm proposed here, declares textual indicators as the foundation for all character development. Alter (1981:116-117) suggests the following list as indicators of character, though each possessing varying degrees of reliability: statements by the narrator, the character's thoughts, the character's speech to others, other character's comments, the character's appearance, and the character's actions. Of course, for each character in Numbers 16 and 17 only some of these are present, and those that are present require awareness of the theoretical nuances described earlier. The ongoing process of trait naming with qualification and elucidation is accomplished with careful attention to indicators from the biblical text. From the assemblage of textual indicators and judgments by the reader, a trajectory of implications begins in the reader's mind around the idea of a person. At this point a guarded measure of reader speculation should be invoked on the pathway of the textual trajectory that allows a reasoned expression of a literary figure. What is proposed is not a rigid formula of characterization, but one

guided by evidence and reasoned intuition. While ascribing traits is one part of characterization, character assessment is primary.

 As previously stated, the narrator's point of view and style in presentation may influence a reader's opinion of a character apart from the overt textual indicators, as the narrator's point of view can be considered a textual indicator but it is often found to be covert. Therefore, details from the chapter on 'point of view' will contribute to this analysis at several points; as noting the narrator's craft and their vantage will direct readers and signal how they are being influenced apart from the surface elements of the story.

Where sufficient evidence exists, the relational component of character should be considered as a contributive aspect of character, especially helpful for modern readers deeply influenced by individualism, distinct from the ancient world. The significance of 'others', family members, tribal members, and leaders within the Old Testament *Weltanschauung* should not be underestimated. In this study, the relationship between Moses and Aaron is particularly noteworthy, though often blatantly ignored in so many treatments of the material.

Of particular interest to characterization for Moses and Aaron is the relationship between their role and their character. Both Moses and Aaron are placed in positions of authority in the community and these roles direct their actions and provide a context or a vocational setting in which they are evaluated. Consequently, their vocational setting is noteworthy for assessing the integrity of their characters as it relates to the expectations of the reader.

5.5 Evaluating the characters in Numbers 16 and 17

Direct statements about any of the characters within the text of Number 16 or 17 are absent. Nonetheless, with two action-filled chapters of conflict, multiple textual indicators of the indirect variety arise which contribute to characterization. The material used in the study will be garnered within the bounds of Numbers 16 and 17. Only minimal assumptions will be evoked from other parts of the Hebrew Bible related to God, Moses, Aaron or the Israelites — participants in Pentateuchal narratives outside the bounds of Numbers 16 and 17. Consequently, this partial excavation of these characters will not produce a full-orbed description of their character, but may provide data for projects that intend to do so.

5.5.1 God in the book of Numbers

Though often times seemingly absent from the narrative, God is the main character of the Hebrew Bible. He is depicted as complex and often mysterious because he is otherworldly. Though person-like (possessing intellect, emotions, and will) God is portrayed as different from humans in substance and power. That humans were created in God's image suggests, in reverse, there is some manner of correlation in the divine-human make up (though deeply controversial), but none advocate an equivalent correspondence. Houston addresses the ethical center of the Old Testament and concludes that the *imitatio dei* is not suitable for guidance in human ethics as widely speaking God operates out of one of two roles in the Old Testament — as king or patron.

'YHWH may then seem human enough, but not necessarily to be imitated' (Houston 2007:25). Because of God's otherness, he cannot be fairly evaluated or viewed in a corresponding manner to humans and in some respects he stands alone. Systematic theologians often view God as immutable and thus draw together data from both testaments and present his qualities as static and ontological. However this is not the way that God is revealed in the narratives of the Hebrew Bible. Especially in narrative, God is revealed in a phenomenological manner over time and in a variety of circumstances.

Typically God is viewed in terms of the roles that he fills and the metaphors that are used to represent his relationship to humanity. In her book *Images of God in the Old Testament*, Mary Mills (1998) recognizes the diverse images that are manifested in the Old Testament in various eras and by different genres. Her approach is to examine all of these images separately without trying to harmonize them. She concludes by considering all of the images under the foundational modes of operation that are first disclosed in the early chapters of Genesis that pose God as creator, judge, and redeemer, noting that all three operations assume a relationship with humanity (Mills 1998:135). Like Mills, a consideration of God in action and in relationship bears the most promise for analyzing the God character in narratives.

A unique literary feature in considering God as a character is to recognize that he operates in two realms, external to the story world and internal. Amit suggests there is a tension between the way God is portrayed between either transcendent or immanent: 'God's position in these stories is affected by two differing perceptions of God's management style of the world: intervening or observing; among us or above us; and acting or only supervising' (Amit 2001:83). In Numbers 16 and 17, God is operative in

both modes, as transcendent other and active participant. Yet, even when God is

considered 'off stage' in the narrative, it is assumed that he is aware of all human

operations within the story world, thus he retains a looming presence. During the

wilderness wanderings, God is uniquely represented as being ever present in the cloud

over the tabernacle in a sense of abiding, and then at strategic points he enters the story

world with a voice and often, interjects the story with various acts of judgment. Because

God actively intervened in the events of the rebellion of Numbers 16 and 17, there are

indicators of character and evidence of his relationship to the humans in the drama.

In Numbers 16 and 17, three features of the God character are depicted, though

each of these is displayed elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. The first is God's acceptance

and response to intercessory prayer (Nm 16:20-23): the second, his actions of judgment

by earth opening, fire, and plague: and last, his concern to forge his relationship with the

Israelites. Each of these has broad theological implications, but the point of this study is

to expose the data rather than to broadly synthesize or theologize. Relevant for the

narrative of Numbers 16 is the manner in which God changes or adjusts his plans in light

of the mediation of Moses—his prophet and primary intercessor.

Addressing Exodus 32:30-35, a very similar intercessory prayer, Fretheim

marvels at God's willingness to respond to human mediation:

> ….this text reveals *an amazing picture of God*, a God who enters into
> genuine dialogue with chosen leaders and takes their contribution to the
> discussion with the utmost seriousness. It is a God who works at the
> level of possibility, but it is not a God who is indecisive or vacillating,
> filled with uncertainties. It is a God who chooses not to act alone in
> such matters for the sake of the integrity of the relationships established.
> God chooses to share the decision-making process with the human
> partner, in the interests of honoring the relationship with Moses and a
> final determination that is the best for as many as possible. This is a

God who remains genuinely open to the future for an extended period of time….

<div align="right">Fretheim (1991:291-291)</div>

While this assertion exposes theological issues dealing with God's relationship to time, it magnifies God's willingness to genuinely interact with his prophet and his world. For character considerations, this gracious acceptance of intercession works in juxtaposition to the expressions of God's wrath and judgment most prominent in Hebrew narratives.

Nonetheless, God's activity and interaction with human history is stridently observed in divine acts of judgment, spectacularly displayed in Numbers 16 and 17. While these acts of divine judgment (the opening of the earth, the divine fire, and the rapidly advancing plague) highlight God's sense of justice, and in their context, they demonstrate a novel response to rebellion and disobedience that concurrently upheld the election of Moses and Aaron (Wenham 1981:138). The sensational and severe nature of these punishments were not entirely indiscriminate as they decisively exhibited divine causation, and two of the three judgments focused on specific misdeeds of the rebels inferring a message as a force for future deterrent.

Notwithstanding these dramatic punishments, in surveying the wilderness narratives, Preuss suggests that God was gracious and compassionate in remaining with the complaining Israelites and providing for their human needs and gave them 'underserved divine accompaniment' (Preuss 1995:80). Despite the fact that God harshly judged the Israelites in Numbers 16, two further actions suggest God's patience towards the people.

First, God responded to the intercession of Aaron with the censor sparing many Israelites from the deadly plague. Second, God orchestrated the staff demonstration to affirm his choice of Aaron's priesthood — signifying that there would be an ongoing worshipping community with access to God. Further, the staff test of Numbers 17 was instigated by God and was intended to bring stability to the community and give the Israelites assurance of God's election of the Aaronide priesthood. God was not satisfied with the aftermath of the plague, even though Aaron's role was magnified by his censor intervention. The budded staff was to be put on display, as a sign and warning to that future rebels might 'not die' (וְלֹא יָמֻתוּ) (Nm 17:10), and 'signifies the blessing of power of God's holy presence as conveyed through the Aaronic priesthood that gives life and bears fruit amongst God's sinful people' (Olson 1996:112). While God is figured strongly as a punishing judge in Numbers 16, he is exemplified as a provider and guardian for his people in Numbers 17 by legitimizing the priesthood of Aaron, in a self-initiated test, and thereby ascribing a hopeful future for the nation.

5.5.2 Moses in Numbers 16 and 17

Moses is quantifiably the most well developed human character in the Pentateuch, and likewise possesses the most psychological depth, relative to biblical characterization. Certainly Moses occupied a singular and unique position as God's prophetic leader over the nation with aspects of his role and activities having an impact on characterization. As Moses has considerable exposure in the Exodus to Numbers, it will have to be assumed that readers have at least some pre-knowledge of Moses' abiding qualities and traits that have characterized his tenure.

Because of the tendency of biblical narrative towards omitting psychological depth, almost every character sketch or description of Moses is centered on his activity or role in Israel's history. So Hoffmeier (1986:423-424) defines Moses as: leader, lawgiver, prophet, and author, diligently expressing the scope and quality of each role or function, yet his description is void of any significant mention of his essential personhood. Oliver O'Donovan (1996:50) highlights the necessity of Moses' mediating role as someone who would intercede between the people and the holy God YHWH. Von Rad (1962:293) develops Moses' prophetic role in Israel and states: 'But the prophecy which Moses represents is of a special type — he is much more the prophet of action, taking an active hand in the events, and doing so not only through the directions which he gives, but also, and supremely, by means of dramatic miracles.' Notwithstanding, the role which Moses filled in the Israelite community, this provides only a vocational setting and a cluster of expectations for readers. From this juncture, a thorough examination of the textual indicators in Numbers 16 and 17 will reveal several features and observations about Moses' overall character.

In the opening scene (Nm 16:1-4) 250 rebellious community leaders confront Moses specifically, and Aaron secondarily, (though Aaron seems to be in the shadows through much of the conflict) on two fronts: an accusation that Moses is overstepping his authority רַב־לָכֶם (literally: 'too much to you') and second, that Moses possesses a condescending attitude towards the community. Rather than evaluate these statements, it is the response of Moses that allows the reader a look into his inner world and appraise his character. These indictments are in stark contrast to the narrative thread that upholds Moses' meekness and humility in the previous five chapters in Numbers. Apparently the

171

author wants the reader to gasp at the absurdity of the rebel's allegations. One would expect an immediate impassioned rebuttal from Moses, but that is surprisingly not the case — certainly itself an indicator of his humility and poise (Noth 1968:124). Rather, Moses acting with great self-control and maturity prostrated himself in prayer, even with this daunting rebellion fomenting before his eyes. This response not only signifies his self-control over his emotions but also displays his devout faith in God as the true arbiter of his leadership. Choosing against a swift retort or defense to this socially influential group, he consulted God for the enterprise to assail this uprising. This level of restraint demonstrates his composure in the face of pressure and his spiritual commitment in turning to prayer for divine adjudication.

While the narrator provided no information about the content of the prayer or the response from God, after a reasonably short passage of time, (as the rebels did not disperse before the retort), Moses responded with deliberate and careful instructions. Also unknown is whether these instructions for a priestly test on the following day were prescribed by God or was of Moses' design. The genius of the test however, is that it points directly and dangerously at the cultic role of the high priest. While the initial instructions themselves do not reveal character indicators and are lacking in emotive terminology, the instructions end with an acerbic counter-accusation to the community leaders (Nm 16:7c) turning their own words against them רַב־לָכֶם ('too much to you'). This snipe was not necessary for the purposes of pronouncing the directions, but its brevity, though pointed, exhibits Moses' irritation at their attack on his personal leadership. Moses also follows up with a detailed rhetorical question proposing the Levites did not recognize their honored position but wanted even more power and honor.

172

In the diatribe that follows (Nm 16:8-11) Moses demonstrates his ability to perceive and articulate the situation on a grander scale, seeing beyond the immediate attack on his performance as a leader. The reengagement interjects an obligatory quotation formula וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־קֹרַח (and Moses said to Korah), not really necessary as the audience did not change from verse 5, though may suggest a pause in time, or an editorial gaff (Nm 16:8). Though the quotation formula makes Korah the object, the actual lecture that follows is twice addressed in the plural to include Korah's Levite followers (מִכֶּם) and (אֶתְכֶם), signifying Moses' awareness that a broad conspiracy was underfoot. Though not revealed by the narrator earlier, Moses identified the rebel's ingratitude for their elevated position as Levities: spiritual leaders, teachers of the people, and stewards of the tabernacle. His carefully worded and detailed response with considerable annoyance reveals his growing frustration. However, under the circumstances, such aggravation would be expected of a maligned leader — it does suggest a breakdown of his composure. Nonetheless Moses demonstrates his courage and acumen by verbally exposing the discontent of the rebels and their ambition for greater power.

After Dathan and Abiram refused to respond to Moses' summons and made another complaint directed at Moses' failure as a leader (Nm 16:13-15), Moses was very angry (וַיִּחַר לְמֹשֶׁה מְאֹד). But instead of defending himself to any human, he appealed directly to God in a modestly imprecatory manner. 'Moses was very angry and said to the LORD, "Pay no attention to their offering."' (Nm 16:15a). Budd (1984:187) expects this idiom is 'a prayer against Dathan and Abiram. The expression is probably a way of saying that Yahweh should not listen to Dathan and Abiram, or show them any favor

when they do come before him.' However, the second part of Moses' retort is a bit inexplicable: 'I have not taken one donkey from them, and I have not harmed any one of them' (Nm 16:15b), seems to have been 'a conventional way of asserting one's honesty and integrity (Davies 1995:173; cf. Noth 1968:126). Therefore, the bite of this prayer of condemnation is not a savage one, but its import is a petition for a right judgment between Moses and his accusers.

Milgrom (1989:422) advocates that Moses displays 'self-inflation' as he goes beyond his previous pattern of prayerful intercession. 'This time, however, not only does he ask God to destroy Dathan and Abiram, but he even specifies the means of the destruction' (Milgrom 1989:422). Milgrom also acknowledges that Moses could have been much more dictatorial and ordered the execution of the rebels; he could have rallied supporters and exacted his own vengeance against the rebels, but he still left the ultimate judgment up to God. Despite Moses' agitation and definitive response to Dathan and Abiram, while showing Moses' growing impatience and outspokenness on this occasion, does not invalidate his leadership. While Moses' annoyance has bubbled to the surface in this text, it was in response to significant provocation. Nonetheless, in two consecutive scenes, Moses functions well but there are signs that his frustration level is growing and his words are betraying his loss of composure.

After the rebels assembled at the Tent of Meeting and God appeared to exterminate the entire community, Moses and Aaron fell face down and cried out in prayer, petitioning God to spare the people (Nm 16:22). In their strident prayer, they appeal to God's sense of justice, wishing only the leader to be punished instead of the whole community. Cole (2000:266) highlights the humility of these established leaders

who would supplicate for the benefit of their accusers, rather than appealing for far-reaching vengeance. Remarkably Moses' higher concern is for justice over vengeance.

Though the entire community had been impugning his leadership, he petitioned God to charge the offense against 'one man' (הָאִישׁ אֶחָד), a clause in which the noun is fronted for emphasis. Furthermore, the appeal to the 'the God of the spirit of all flesh,' suggests Moses' recognition of God's authority over all life. Patrick Miller (1994:62) highlights that: 'Moses' appeal here is to God as the source of all life…the appeal is in relation to God's power over life, capable of destroying it as well as creating it….The address may also imply that the one who is the God of all life should protect it and not destroy it.'

Based on this intercession, God provisionally restricted punishment to the leaders, highlighting the power of Moses' petitioning and his desire for the nation's preservation. This intercession highlights Moses' sense of justice and his boldness so as to confront God.

> The daring and persistent manner in which Moses carries on an intercessory dialogue with God….That the people are not that innocent—see verse 19—simply underscores how far Moses was willing to go in appealing to the Lord, even to stretching the facts if doing so will touch a divine nerve….and all of these prayers need to be looked at together as an ongoing intercession of a leader for a people who continually rebel and disobey.
>
> (Miller 1994:272).

In the punishment scene, readers observe Moses speaking with boldness and acting with assertion (Nm 16:28-30). Perhaps revealing a whole new expression of his character and faith, Moses breaks the pattern of his past more mechanical leadership. Britt (2004:5) underscores that the lack of spontaneity in Moses' entire career, who 'rarely seems to acts on his own initiative'; but on this occasion Moses foregoes restraint. Though

indeterminate, if in fact the judgment was of his design and not instigated by God, it would have demonstrated tremendous astuteness. The punishment that Moses enacted needed to do two things: decisively reprove the rebels, leaving a lasting deterrent to the community, and additionally demonstrate God's definitive calling of Moses and Aaron as Israel's civic and spiritual leaders. Upon God's execution of Moses' very words, the effect upon the whole community should have been to shore up his position as leader, yet it was not entirely effective in the moment.

In dyadic relation to his brother Aaron, Moses consistently supported Aaron's role and shared the spotlight of leadership with him. Though Moses is portrayed as the far stronger character, he vocally upheld Aaron's position and prayed with him in concert to mediate for the people. Further, at Moses' bidding Aaron was sent into the midst of the plague with his censor, an action that exalted Aaron's role before the people, and Moses did not attempt to overshadow him. Even in his relationship to his brother, the reader senses the humility of Moses, comfortable to share the limelight with his sibling, despite the record of having been previously slandered by Aaron in Numbers 11.

In sum, Moses has certain generic characteristics including: humility and maturity, the boldness to rebut the accusations of socially powerful insurgents, discernment in being able to grasp the motivations and ambitions of the rebels, spiritually minded, seeking God's judgment and mercy in dealing with earthly affairs, and finally compassion towards his own people, despite their mutiny. Taking seriously Milgrom's position, though less stridently, Moses' exacerbated retort to his accusers does suggest self-inflation, but not to the point of condemnation. Readers would expect Moses to be experiencing a high level of internal frustration and defensiveness. Milgrom concludes

his discussion of Moses' self-inflation 'Thus the physical ordeals of the wilderness and the psychological harassment of his accusers have worn his patience, shaken his equilibrium, and flawed his performance. Still, in the human record, he remains the leader par excellence' (Milgrom 1989:423). These characteristics have certainly been observed before and after this narrative, but here we observe them in a highly charged, emotional challenge to Moses' leadership. Though signs exist that his patience was fraying, Moses manifests considerable restraint and mercy. Readers should judge this to be the summit of Moses' leadership of Israel, but detect that he is on a pathway to failure. Here Barzel's words broadly addressing Moses' character and the matter of fact presentation of even its heroes is quite fitting: 'The Bible story presents a pattern of human complexity which embraces, in Moses' case, both tragedy and sublimity, and both at their highest pitch' (Barzel 1974:140). In Numbers 16 and 17, Moses performs his duties with insight and decisiveness, but his words to the rebels display growing anger and lack of composure.

5.5.3   Korah in Numbers 16 and 17

While born into the influential tribe of Levi, Korah was the firstborn son of Izhar, younger brother to Amram, making Korah a first cousin to Moses, thus setting up a family rivalry that, while not directly addressed in the plot, should be detected by the careful reader (Ex 6:16-20). Korah is prominently introduced with a four level linear genealogy, longer and more prestigious than the other disputants, linking him directly to Levi. Not only this, but Korah was from the clan of Kohath, the custodians of the sacred furniture of the tabernacle, next in prominence to the priesthood (Wenham 1981:135).

Being the firstborn suggests by the cultural norm of primogeniture that he was destined for importance, minimally headship over his own family, though there was at times a seeming deviation of this policy, both in biblical and ancient Near East accounts (Harrison 1979:515-516). While the plot depicts an uprising of national proportions, there are robust familial and tribal jealousies at play.

It is Moses' accusation (Nm 16:8-10) that exposes Korah's motive to seize the high priesthood for himself — suggesting an aspiration for the highest religious office, without even considering God's preference for Aaron (Cole 2000:264). This suggests his discontentedness with the prominent role that he already possessed as a significant member of the Levite tribe (Olson 1996:103). While Moses' accusation could be viewed suspiciously, that he falsely accuses and attributes evil and ambitious motives to Korah. However, the narrator poses no response by Korah to this charge. Also corroborating Moses' claim is the family tree of Korah, starkly fronted in the narrative, acknowledging him as the firstborn to Izhar's the brother of Amram. This places Korah in a strong family position to assert himself as leader or priest. Further, his silence and compliance to the censor test, clearly a cultic activity, confirms Korah's aspirations for the high priest's office.

Drawing upon the narrator's point of view, when Korah steps onto the scene, he is in clear opposition to Moses, the established leader and mediator. Thus, Korah is immediately cast in a dim light. The point of view strategy employed for Korah creates antipathy, 'a reactive and hostile attitude of the reader towards a character' (Marguerat & Bourquin 1999:70). The narrator allows Moses to expose Korah's desire for the priesthood, esteeming Moses as possessing the keen insight. In fact, the reader hears no

individual words from Korah himself, as he is only joined in the general complaint at the outset (Nm 16:3). Korah is really an allusive figure who is only known through his interaction with Moses who is far more qualified than the reader to supply the unfeigned motive behind Korah's insurgence. However, Korah should not be considered a weak 'straw man' in the narrative. Korah's reported ability to negatively influence 250 leading men manifests a strong personal bearing and power (Nm 16:2). Throughout the dispute, Moses is subtly exalted by the narrator's strategies, and all the while, Korah is denigrated.

In addition to Korah assembling the whole community in a ground swell of support, the location of Korah's attempted coup reveals something of his audacity. In Numbers 16:19, at the crescendo of the rebellion, Korah assembled the whole congregation against them 'at the entrance of the tent of meeting' (אֶל־פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד) a location that was equivalent to Israel's cultic center stage. In highlighting the importance of the movement and the spatial markers in Numbers 16, Mirguet rightly points out the stature of this location in Israel's sacerdotal affairs and consequently, the brashness of Korah to use that locality. 'By taking such an initiative, Korah seems to be trying to displace Moses and Aaron. Assembling the people at the place where Moses serves as intermediary between YHWH and the people, where the investiture of the priests takes place, Korah positions himself as an alternative to the leadership of Moses and Aaron' (Mirguet 2008:330). The location of the gathering intensifies the presumption and brazenness of Korah's attempt to take the leadership away from Moses and Aaron.

Surprisingly, in this famous story about Korah, the principal rebel, he is given no words of his own. He says nothing on his own and has no dialogue with anyone. This would seem to be the narrator's design, a choice not to endow the villain with the privilege of words. He is not allowed to justify or defend himself. He becomes renowned for stirring up revolt behind closed doors, not a transparent public figure, but as a shadowy conniver. This technique of the writer so demurs Korah as to make him a paragon of evil and rebellion, using only the evidence of his superintending of the revolt while deploying almost no dialogue. A remarkable contrast to Korah are his sons, Tahath, Assir and Ebiasaph (1Chr 6:37) who were later entrusted as temple musicians, and distinguished themselves as either writers, composers, or singers connected by the superscriptions to several Psalms (Pss 42-49; 84, 85, 87, 88).

In sum, a caricature for Korah from the textual indicators in Numbers 16 is not productive or satisfactory in terms of individuating and cataloguing Korah as a person. The plot suggests Korah had considerable influence and bearing as a character — as he was able to provoke and give leadership to a sweeping rebellion. Nevertheless, the narrator simply has not provided sufficient data to in anyway describe Korah's personhood, beyond his archetypal representation as a rebellion leader.

5.5.4   Aaron in Numbers 16 and 17

Aaron was selected as the very first high priest for the nation of Israel, seemingly, because of his sibling attachment to Moses. As Moses wavered at the time of his divine calling (Ex 3:1-4:17), God assigned Aaron the role of spokesperson, particularly in the critical confrontations with Pharaoh and Israel (Ex 4:15; 7:1-2). Aaron was endowed

with a high social standing in Israel, apart from any previous accomplishments or reported advanced personal qualities. He was established as the chosen agent of God who would later be considered high priest *par excellence* (Honeycutt 1977:533). But there are several critical events that expose Aaron's weakness of character and the nuances that surround this trait of personal weakness: the golden calf incident (Ex 32), grumbling with Miriam (Nm 12:1-12), and the later downfall of Moses and Aaron (Nm 20). The Korahide rebellion confirms, to a lesser degree, this same tendency to weakness.

Central to Aaron's persona in Scripture is his official role as high priest for the nation of Israel. The immediate image that springs to a reader's mind is Aaron robed in his ornate priestly garments, in dutiful service at the tent of Meeting. The most extensive treatment of Aaron in the Pentateuch surrounds his priestly function: the priest's personal consecration, the donning of the priestly vestments, and his ministry at the tabernacle— paramount on the Day of Atonement. In his duties, he is silently portrayed as faultless. While there are those who may question whether Aaron took seriously his supervision of Nadab and Abihu (Lv 10), there are no textual indicators suggesting that Aaron had knowledge of their indiscretion(s), and there is no direct castigation for such a failure anywhere in the Old Testament. Therefore, it should not be overlooked that Aaron seemingly served faithfully and obediently as the first official high priest, in a role that required diligence and propriety (Ex 29; Lv 21-22).

In Numbers 16 and 17, Aaron's personhood is relegated to a secondary function, like he is in every other narrative involving Moses (Margaliot 1983:204) but it is more dramatically observed here because the priesthood is at the heart of the conflict. Like

Korah, Aaron is assigned no individual dialogue; yet he performs admirably on two accounts. Aaron is observed as Moses' prayer partner in supplicating before God, even though the rebels he was supplicating for were actually trying to supplant him (Nm 16:22). This uncommon grace bodes well for his character at his point in his life. Second, at the urging of Moses, Aaron obediently steps into the midst of the ongoing plague, censor in hand, and intercedes for the suffering and dying people (Nm 16:47). While atonement would normally be accomplished through a blood sacrifice, this 'unattested ritual for making atonement in Israel; rather, it was simply considered by the narrator to be an appropriate way of contrasting the unauthorized use of incense by the rebels (v. 18) with the offering of incense by a duly qualified person...' (Davies 1995:180). The unconventional nature of this intervention upholds Aaron's authority and his faith. Olson (1996:106-107) points out that mediating for the people was the duty of the priests and Levites as they 'formed a buffer zone between the sinful people of Israel and the fiery holiness of God's presence in the midst of the camp.' While it is conceded that Aaron personally recedes behind his brother in these two chapters, he nobly and graciously fulfils his role as a beneficent high priest.

Britt (2004:124) notes the discrepancy in the relationship between Moses and Aaron. 'Despite the necessity of Aaron's commission and his superior eloquence, Moses clearly stands above him in the chain of command.' While Aaron was first commissioned to assist Moses in being his advocate and public voice for Moses (Ex 2:11-15), Moses completely takes the plenary lead over Aaron in Numbers 16 and 17. Though certainly enigmatic, it may also point to the growing confidence of Moses in his leadership and oracular abilities.

Carrying over from the chapter on point of view, it appears that the position of high priest is esteemed in two scenes—Aaron standing in the gap and Aaron's rod budding—but his personage gets little support or attention. This may be indicative of a narrative that is more focused on the sacerdotal role than an interest in the character of Aaron, or for that matter any subsequent high priest. 'While Moses achieves an unparalleled intimacy with YHWH, his characteristic leadership is only temporary, and it is Aaron who must later institutionalize in a priest cult what Moses has begun' (Britt 2004:125). For the narrator here, position takes priority over characterization. While the temptation to ascribe more traits and platitudes regarding Aaron lingers, the insufficient data in these chapters suggests that no more can be reliably stated.

5.5.5   Dathan and Abiram

These two unmanageable rebels are portrayed as a unified pair having no individuation. Typified by their insolence in refusing to respond to Moses' summons, they refuse to 'go up' (נַעֲלֶה) at the beginning and the end of their denial (Nm 16:12, 14) which probably refers to 'going up to a superior' (Budd 1984:187). The author, in correspondence, used subtle but truculent irony in describing their judgment as 'and they went down' (וַיֵּרְדוּ) into the Sheol alive (Nm 16:33) (Magonet 1982:18). On top of their obvious contempt towards the hero Moses, the narrator's point of view also prejudices the reader against this insolent duo.

Source criticism assists in eliminating certain questions in characterization here. Some commentators attribute sagacity to Dathan and Abiram who were not willing to take up the censors, as perhaps they understood that they were not Levites and had no

personal or family claim to the priesthood. For example, '[T]hey would continue their rebellion from a distance, perhaps remembering the judgment meted out against Nadab and Abihu' (Cole 2000:265). However, if as postulated previously, the two separate rebellion stories (JE+P) were brought together by a redactor (Sturdy 1976:115); then it would not be cogent to attempt to make sense of the two events as if they happened together (synchronically).

In Numbers 16:12-14, the narrator indirectly reports the complaint of Dathan and Abiram expressed as dialogue. Their complaint is different from Korah, who seems to be motivated to supplant the high priest. Their grievance is directed at Moses' failure to deliver the nation into the Promised Land and they are repelled by his authoritative leadership. Their complaint is obviously misdirected; the readership is perplexed by their complaint as it was because of the people's unbelief, grumbling and rebellion that has prevented them from proceeding directly to their destination. Though their complaint is distinctly different, the acerbity of their rebellion should not be subordinated to Korah's. 'But Dathan and Abiram of the tribe of Reuben are almost as prominent as Korah. In chs. 16 and 26 they are mentioned with him and in Deuteronomy 11:6; Psalms 106:17 are mentioned without him' (Beecher 1986:50). Furthermore, considering point of view as asserted previously, their disobedience and rancor towards Moses inflames readers emotively because they have sympathies for Moses, the human hero figure in the narrative.

5.5.6   Korah's followers — the 250 men

The narrator gives little attention to this group beyond their relationship to Korah, being 'his followers' (עֲדָתוֹ) (Nm 16:5, 6, 11, 16,). Noth (1968:124) points out that this word 'with which P usually describes the "(cultic) congregation" of Israel. The use of this word here must surely be intentional. With his company Korah has arbitrarily created a caricature of a "congregation" and believes that he can thereby speak for the real congregation as a whole.' This active description portrays that the group is submissive to their rebel leader, and in this drama, they are only pawns poised for destruction. It should not be overlooked that this group is introduced as 250 men, 'leaders of the congregation, chosen from the assembly, well-known men' (אַנְשֵׁי־שֵׁם), more literally, 'men of name' (Nm 16:2). This priestly wording and related terms are used to suggest: 'well-known', 'famous' (1 Chr 5:24), or 'men of stature and repute' (Gn 6:4) (Davies 1995:169). In sum, the author has provided no texture to this group except to suggest that amongst the Israelites, they were a prestigious group who were decidedly under Korah's influence.

5.5.7 The people

There is a consensus that analyzing groups for character dynamics is wrought with difficulties. The very individualistic chore of assigning traits to beings with individual names seems to fly in the face of assessing group traits (Polzin 1993:207, 209). But suffice it to say that there may be general behaviour(s) that typifies their disposition and this can be subject to comment in a broad sense (i.e. crowd psychology). Most prominently, the people did not accept their responsibility for failing to obediently and faithfully invade the promised land, but instead, railed and rebelled against their leaders:

Moses and Aaron (Cole 2000:264-265). Further, drawing from the narrator's point of

view, it is clear that the people continued to sympathize with their rebel leaders even after

witnessing their divine judgments (Nu. 16:41) as they continued their grumbling (Davies

1995:179). The narrator makes it obvious and mystifying to the reader how dull and

misdirected are the erratic Israelites. Finally, the narrator powerfully portrays the fear

and insecurity of the congregation by closing the narrative with a haunting rhetorical

question, 'are we all to perish?' (Nm 17:13). Such a potent ending to the episode is

surely intended to engage the reader's bewilderment and pity for the people's estate—

tacitly the opposite of the peace and security envisioned for the covenantal people of

God.

5.6   Conclusion

As is common with much of biblical narrative, only the major characters possess any

significant development, and even in this case, the textual indicators are sparse. The

textual features provide only some insight into the characters: God, Moses, and Aaron.

With Korah, the indicators and narrator's strategies are strikingly negative, but he is flatly

and trenchantly portrayed as the instigator and wanton leader of the uprising. Dathan and

Abiram follow in the same pattern as Korah as one dimensional malcontents. The people

are portrayed as hapless and unstable. They align themselves with a rebellion leader, but

will not return to Moses even after witnessing God's judgments against the rebel leaders.

The narrator dramatically ends the narrative with the people left timorously insecure,

unsure of their fate. Such an emotional ending was surely meant to leave an impact on

the reader — a warning about the consequences of unfaithfulness. This comes full circle

to the overall intention of the priestly writers as expressed by Knierim and Coats (2005:26) 'to submit in and with their portrayal of the foundational past their own theological program for the true congregations, together with the warning against the repetition of the failure of the original generations.'

6   THE IMPLIED READER'S SENSITIVITIES AND THE PLOT OF NUMBERS 16 AND 17

In the previous chapters, it was established that the narrative unit in Numbers 16 and 17 is an interlaced plot that has been redacted in such a way as to present three stories with a unified theme. This chapter will examine the sequential plot movement of these three stories through a 'quinary scheme' and concurrently analyze the character and qualities of the plot. The movement of the plot will then be examined for its aesthetic qualities and its potential to enjoin the implied reader's sensitivities. Before initiating this analysis, it is necessary to explicate the basis for such a plot analysis that includes: a construal of the implied reader within the communicative model, an appraisal of reader-response criticism and the role of the reader, and finally, a synthesis of these foundational issues applied to the nature of plot and plot analysis.

Plot, as articulated by Abrams, envisions not just the bland reconstruction of events, but encompasses the artistic features of the discourse embedded in the text and the intended influence upon readers. 'The plot (which Aristotle termed *mythos*) in a dramatic or narrative work is constituted by its events and actions, as these are rendered and ordered toward achieving particular emotional and artistic effects' (Abrams 2005:233). Following Abrams' definition, we are rightly inclined to accommodate the role of the reader, in this case the 'implied reader,' in our pursuit of understanding. That is, the analysis of plot traces the dramatic or dissident movements in a story that are bound to the reader's internal reaction. This study will elucidate a productive theory for plot analysis, the 'quinary scheme,' as most suitable for the style of Hebrew narrative as found in Numbers 16 and 17. Plot analysis thus involves giving attention to structure and discourse, on one hand, and to content and flow of thought on the other. The plot of

Numbers 16 and 17 highlights the sharpness of the conflict between Moses and the rebels as well as portraying the decisive action of God as the dispeller of rebellion and murmur.

6.1   The implied reader

Tracing the plot and the anticipated response to the content and the discourse of the plot requires an understanding of the reading process, the nature and role of the reader—or specifically with literary works, the concept of the implied reader. The implied reader is a construct that is configured from the strategies and assumptions of the implied author (also a construct) and is rooted in the text. The implied reader is not the real or actual reader but rather an abstraction that represents the reader. This composition of the implied reader is made possible by the aesthetic, rhetorical, and structural dimensions of the text, which can be explored by literary critics who are paying specific attention to the discourse of the text. Also, this analysis of the implied reader and the reading process requires definition of several factors involving foundational hermeneutical principles that undergird this narrative approach.

Figure 1[2]

Actual Author(s)	Implied Author	Narrator	Text	Narratee	Implied Reader	Actual Reader(s)

First, a dissection of the widely held communication model (Figure 1) of Chatman (1978:151) provides the backdrop for a construal of the implied reader. Current literary theory looks for meaning within the matrix of the implied author, the text, and the implied reader. I will argue that fixating on any one of these to the exclusion of the

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[2] The shaded units indicate the boundaries of determinacy (cf. Chatman 1978:151).

189

others, leads to one interpretive fallacy or another. This communication model will be surveyed beginning from the corresponding outside levels working towards the center, in order to constitute an appropriate hermeneutic for this literary construal of the plot in Numbers 16 and 17.

Attempting to reconstruct the actual author is, in principle, an unfruitful project, for we have no direct access to the actual author, and often times, in the biblical corpus their identity is elusive or entirely unknown. Also, as in the case with much of the Old Testament, particularly the Pentateuch, the text is a composite with multiple authors or groups of authors compiling and writing over a long period of time, making a construal of a single human author implausible. Yet despite these obstacles, we cannot completely reject the idea of the author—as the product presumes a producer. From a philosophical perspective, Ricoeur (1976:30) reminds that on one hand a text has a semantic autonomy from its author, but dialectically cannot be completely severed from its human originator.

> If the intentional fallacy overlooks the semantic autonomy of the text, the opposite fallacy forgets that a text remains a discourse told by somebody, said by someone to someone else about a something. It is impossible to cancel out this main characteristic of discourse without reducing texts to natural objects, i.e., to things which are not man-made, but which, like pebbles, are found in the sand.

(Ricoeur 1976:30)

While the author is inaccessible to interpreters, their existence is not entirely without foundation; if there is no historical author, there is no text (Garcia 1994:252). Consequently, the construct of the implied author, though an abstraction, serves as a median between the real author and the text, and provides judicious accessibility to interpreters. Of course in a synchronic study, where we are not concerned with the genesis of the text, the implied author reflects the final redactor, and can be discerned

190

from the text by the strategies used in the discourse, the selection and content of the text, and the worldview concerns that are delineated from the narrative. Though some seek to establish and maintain the absolute presence of the real author for hermeneutical and historical reasons, it is more reasonable to concede the obstacles in such a reconstruction and move to a theoretical construct of the author—the nameless implied author. Furthermore, where the author's intentionality is raised in this study, the author's psychological volition is not in mind, but rather a contribution to the implied author's activities derived from the network of indicators 'embodied' or 'objectified' in the text that signal a communicative action (Sternberg 1985:9). Following Vanhoozer (1998:253) who delineates the distinction: '[I]t is only fallacious to appeal to intention when the appeal is to some mental, pre-textual event, rather than to the intention embodied in the text.' In summary, literary critics tend to accept the implied author as a holistic construct that encompasses: '[T]he system of values, world-view, the norms, interests, and creative power that we can discern in a narration are signs of the presence of this implied author' (Ska 2000:41).

Not only are there literary difficulties in attempting to maintain the construct of real author, but there are philosophical obstacles as well. First, the character of the implied author and real author are often thought to be divergent, as one's writing voice is likely—unconsciously with biblical texts—in variance with one's ontological existence. Though less of a feature in composite biblical stories than in novels, Wayne Booth highlights the distinction between the author's 'real' self and their authorial self. Booth calls the implied author the 'second self' suggesting: 'This implied author is always distinct from the "real man"—whatever we may take him to be—who creates a superior

version of himself….as he creates his work' (Booth 1983:151). Thus, the real author

would also be a construct but distanced from the interpreter by one further level of

abstraction. The tenuous connection between the real author and implied author is

particularly clear when an author writes several different stories and intentionally adjusts

his narratorial voice for each of their stories. 'Thus while the flesh-and-blood author is

subject to the vicissitudes of real life, the implied author of a particular work is conceived

as a stable entity, ideally consistent with itself within the work' (Rimmon-Kenan

2002:88). Therefore, the implied author is a necessary abstraction that may represent the

real author in a manner that avoids the problems associated with reconstructing the

elusive real author.

The implied author is a broader construct, as compared to the more particular

narrator, but they are intrinsically related constructs. To utilize these two related

abstractions it is necessary to define and understand their interwoven relationship.

'Unlike the narrator, the implied author can *tell* us nothing. He, or better, *it* has no voice,

no direct means of communication. It instructs us silently, through the design of the

whole, with all the voices, by all the means it has chosen to let us learn' (Chatman

1978:148). While the narrator provides the voice of the implied author, it is only the

implied author that, in some manner, can be holistically construed through gathering

indicators from the aggregate features of the text (Bal 1997:18). Chatman (1978:148,

149) prefers to distinguish between the concept of implied author and the narrator,

likewise with the implied reader and the narratee. This seems most suitable with modern

literature where a single author may create multiple implied authors. However with

biblical narratives, this distinction is conceptually less necessary as there is a general

uniformity in ideology and worldview amongst the various biblical authors. As the narrator is considered the 'voice' of the implied author, it is conceptually subservient to the implied author. For similar reasons, there is little need to extricate the narratee from the implied reader as will be illustrated later. Therefore there is a limited need to distinguish between the implied author and the narrator, especially in this chapter that examines the broader movement of plot. The narrator was previously bifurcated and dissected in the detailed analysis of point of view (chapter 4 of this study) where what is envisioned and spoken by the narrator is paramount.

In conducting biblical analysis, several prominent narrative critics equate the actual author to the narrator, bypassing the implied author altogether (see Ska 2000:42; Fokkelman 1999:55; Bar-Efrat 2004:14; Amit 2001:94; Rhoads, Dewey & Michie 1999:39). It appears natural for biblical narrative critics to subsume the idea of the implied author into the construct of the narrator, as the compendious nature of biblical stories, tracking the narrator's voice seems most natural for narrative critics who tend to focus on the smaller textual features of the narrative discourse—the narrator's voice. The only minor advantages in acknowledging the construct of the implied author is that (1) its lexical relationship to the author resists the idea that the narrator is distant from the author, (2) it acknowledges the history of the concept of the implied author in literary theory, and (3) it is exclusively a construct that synthetically incorporates themes and worldview concerns of the narrator in a more holistic manner. In this chapter dealing with plot, because the distinction is understood, the narrator and implied author shall be considered the same unless the analysis requires bifurcation.

On the other end of the communication model is the actual reader who, like the actual author, is transitory, theoretically existing in any number of times, cultures, social positions, political affiliation, etc. There is no way to comprehensively account for such diversity of perspectives in reading and the reading experience. However, just as there is access to the implied author by abstraction, there is a similar way to isolate the implied reader, as a construct derived from the literary strategies and rhetorical import of the text. 'Every narration contains an invitation to share a certain experience, to imagine and recreate a universe, to get in touch with certain values, feelings, decisions, and world-views' (Ska 2000:43). The only reason an interpreter can anticipate another reader's (implied reader) possible reaction(s) to a text is the generally analogous or mimetic nature of human existence and experience.

I will now garner the philosophical underpinnings that elucidate the implied reader, and will rely on various fields of inquiry or 'criticisms' that all share some tangential interests, including: reader response and audience-oriented criticism, literary, rhetorical, semiotic and structuralist, phenomenological, historical. Susan Suleiman (1980:6) flamboyantly describes the situation in scholarship in a way that justifies this approach: 'Audience-oriented criticism is not one field but many, not a single widely trodden path but a multiplicity of crisscrossing, often divergent tracks that cover a vast area of the critical landscape in a pattern whose complexity dismays the brave and confounds the faint of heart.' In drawing from various disciplines, like other narrative critics, the theories that present themselves as most suitable for analyzing Hebrew narratives and the literary aims of the biblical corpus will be appropriated.

To begin, the poststructuralist's criticism of the implied reader is that the implied reader is ultimately only a construct mirroring the interests, presuppositions, and cultural situation of the scholarly examiner (cf. Iser 1978:28). Though this may have some validity, poststructuralism tends to skeptically embellish the tainted and biased nature of the reader. Nonetheless, a self-critical awareness of one's historical situation and a focus on the author-text-reader matrix, will counter the tendency towards a bias laden reading. In this study, the implied reader will be assumed theoretically to be a composite of an experienced reader (though allusions will be made to the sundry elements of the text that are crafted to create surprise, especially important to the uninitiated and first-time reader), and consultation will be made with many experienced readers from various eras, traditions, and localities, and to aspire to 'reading competence' according to Sternberg's definition.

Sternberg defines reading competence, not just as 'paying attention' to the text or 'close reading', but rather an adherence to the norms of the text. 'Within the overall poetics, the ideology/history/aesthetics trio combines to issue joint directives for the reading, as for the writing, hence to (con)textualize the limits of *biblical* poetic competence' (Sternberg 1992:469). In Sternberg's estimation, if a reader is unwilling to postulate the biblical worldview, they are disqualified from being a competent reader. In a similar approach, Ska suggests that the implied reader is less a person and more a role that readers are invited to play. 'Each narration contains an invitation to share a certain experience, to imagine and recreate a universe, to get in touch with certain values, feelings, decisions, and world-views' (Ska 2000:43). Both Ska and Chatman temper Sternberg's position, recognizing that not every reader will accept the ideology of the

author, and consequently contend that nonbelievers can read Christian works without accepting the ideology, but 'such refusal does not contradict the imaginative or "as if" acceptance of implied readership necessary to the elementary comprehension of the narrative' (Chatman 1978:150). As such, this study will examine the obvious but important trends in the plot (novice reader), and also the more obscure and nuanced features of the action and the narrator's strategy (experienced reader), especially elements observed in the Hebrew text. The nature of the reader also emerges as a cardinal element in the project of plot analysis.

6.2   Reader response versus reader sensitivity

Reader response criticism has offered several constructive insights for narrative criticism and incited a new appreciation for the role of the reader in interpretation. Yet, there is the interpretive peril found at the extremes of the movement, particularly those who completely evaluate and find meaning in the emotional effects of the text upon the reader—known as the Affective Fallacy (Abrams 2008:5). Likewise, the 'radical' or 'poststructural' reader response critics reject the subject-object dichotomy (text/reader) and shift all sense of meaning to the reading experience and the mind of the reader; consequently, the reader becomes the arbiter and even creator of all textual understanding (Crosman 1980:162-164). The loss of the text is the fear of many biblical critics, exemplified by Stanley Fish in his later work (after he was strongly influenced by phenomenology and the speech act theory of J. L. Austin and John Searle), where he makes the famous statement: '[I]nterpretation is not the art of construing but the art of constructing. Interpreters do not decode poems; they make them' (Fish 1980:327). But,

196

he attempts to evade the text-reader dialectic and solipsism by inaugurating the interpretive community as the interpretive canon, placing boundaries on the potential discoveries of individual readers (Fish 1980:321). Notwithstanding, without the presence and constraints of a text being the dominant force in interpretation, there exists the potential for readings that are unnatural to the import of the text, as observed in the arguments of Chatman and Sternberg. Although reader response can be taken to extremes, there remains obvious value in the more conservative insights of the movement that recognize the role that the reader plays in the interpretive process.

Wolfgang Iser, prominent in reader-response theory, located meaning in the encounter between a text and a reader, without minimizing the text. Iser (1974:xii) defines the implied reader with the language of phenomenology: 'This term incorporates both the prestructuring of the potential meaning by the text, and the reader's actualization of this potential through the reading process. It refers to the active nature of this process—which will vary historically from one age to another—and not to a typology of possible readers.' Iser's approach finds meaning in the encounter between the text and the reader in real time. The reader travels with the story and engages it, appealing to the reader's sense of experience, urgency, and immanence of the story world. In the context of readers and plot, he describes the process of 'consistency building' as the reader tests, makes decisions, and fills in blanks and gaps (Iser 1978:122 passim). Iser's view is attractive to biblical critics because he maintains that a text holds out potentiality in its reading, subscribing at least tangentially to formalist ideas, yet at the same time allowing for the experience of reading the text to be a factor in interpretative decisions.

The rhetorical critic Wayne Booth defines the implied reader as an ideal interpreter, those who submit themselves to the ideology and prescriptions of the text. 'Regardless of my real beliefs and practices, I must subordinate my mind and heart to the book if I am to enjoy it to the full. The author creates, in short, an image of himself and another image of his reader; he makes his reader as he makes his second self, and the most successful reading is one in which the created selves, author and reader can find complete agreement' (Booth 1983:138). However, his position (agreement between the implied author and implied reader) possesses a perceived inappropriate circularity—the reader constructs the implied reader from the abstraction of the implied author— is problematic for some poststructuralists (Suleiman 1980:11). Still, there is a difference in noting the brush strokes of the author and the resulting impression upon the reader when an interpreter is sensitive to the difference between the author and the activity of reading. Likewise, Booth's commitment to text/implied author/implied reader, accords well with the general aims and intents of the biblical corpus that is undeniably propagandistic, intending to confront its readers with the theological message of God's existence and his redemptive work. 'The Bible is ideological literature insofar as it seeks, through its rhetoric, to shape reader's minds and hearts in order to brings [sic] their attitude into alignment with its own' (Vanhoozer 1998:175; cf. Auerbach 1953:15). Therefore, in this narrative critical analysis, the assumption is that the implied reader engages the dogma and worldview of the implied author and will, in turn, respond with some uniformity to the discourse strategies utilized by the author as opposed to reading skeptically or ironically, unless there are defensible signals in the text that call for such reading.

Reader-response criticism is often viewed negatively by historical critics, who center their work on the origins, formulation and history of ancient texts. Reader-centered approaches tend to propose that the text has autonomy from its past and may recede from matters of the author's intentionality, textual meaning, and historical matters. Nonetheless, it seems more productive to perceive that narrative and reader-response criticism can build upon and interact with historical critics in ways that are mutually beneficial (Amit 2001:25; Osborne 2006:213). Although McKnight (1999:240) acknowledges this tension within the discipline, he concludes on the matter that 'reader-response approaches are capable of accommodating and utilizing approaches followed in more conventional biblical and literary studies.' Likewise, Sonnet upholds a hermeneutical, reader-oriented approach that need not diminish the historical claim of the biblical record. Addressing Deuteronomy specifically, he says: 'like the rest of the Hebrew Bible narrative, there is no hermeneutic shortcut; the reader has everything to gain by playing by the historiographical and narrative rules of the work' (Sonnet 1997:5). At any level of reading experience, there is a call 'to respond with a child's sense of wonder to story, to sensations, to the weather, to elemental emotions such as terror or love, to mystery, to miracle' (Ryken 1984:29). By heeding the discourse strategies found in the text, the reader inherently detects meaning on some level(s), sometimes cognitively but often emotionally. Therefore, especially in explicating the plot of a text that monitors the dramatic (often emotional) tension of a story, accounting for the engagement of readers must be a factor in such an analysis. One then wonders how the reading ability of individual readers affects their understanding of a narrative.

The reader's experience, that is their maturity and familiarity with the biblical text and the biblical world, is particularly important in the analysis of plot, in two ways. For first-time readers of the biblical text, the element of surprise is heightened by ignorance to the basic elements that create tension, as the novice does not know the structure of the plot or the end of the story. Alternatively, for readers who have previously read the narrative, they have foreknowledge of the major movements of the story, especially the plot's direction and the final outcome. Thus, subsequent readers are more likely to comprehend the subtleties of the conflict, the emotional states of the characters, and the internal impulses of the characters. Beyond this, perhaps a third category would be the seasoned or experienced reader, who has an increased awareness of literary conventions and a knowledge of the biblical corpus, and therefore will grasp the literary nuances of the narrative, the broader cultural and worldview issues, and the intertextual relationships with other stories. The experienced reader possesses pre-understandings and presuppositions creating a reading process reminiscent of the hermeneutical circle expounded by Schleiermacher (1959:40) and later expanded to the hermeneutical spiral (Osborne 2006:417-418). In some cases, though not obviously with Numbers 16 and 17, the reader's experience may even allow for an alternative and even contradictory (ironic) reading (Wilson 2005:252). Sternberg (1990:91) describes the narrative strategy of the biblical text as a foolproof composition as it can be read profitably by readers at many levels: '…its foolproof composition puts the greatest distance between minimal and maximal reading, and very effectively so, if the record of interpretation speaks true.' Thus, the biblical text allows for beneficial understanding by the full range of reader from novice to master.

It may be thought that the first-time reader benefits from the element of surprise, not knowing how the story will end, the final outcome. However, Chatman (1978:59) suggests that suspense can be generated and can indeed, exceed the potential of surprise, even when the end is known. He cites the example of attending a bull fight (if one were so inclined), knowing full well that in the end the bull will die. But the drama exists and is heightened in discovering *how* the bull dies. Likewise, in a story known to the reader, suspense and attention is sustained as the reader attends to the details of 'how' the known end comes about. Therefore, acknowledging the potential for seasoned and mature readers to experience continued benefit from re-reading texts provides a basis for analyzing plot development that is attentive to the nuances of structure, grammar, and lexical usage.

While acknowledging the benefits of the reader's role in interpretation, this study prefers to focus on the reader's sensibilities found in the implied reader. First, anticipating the real reader's response to a text is a futile prospect because of the diversity of potential real readers. Second, by utilizing the terminology 'reader sensitivities' (which includes emotional and rational engagement) avoids confusing this study's appreciation for the reader with the presuppositions found in the extremes of reader-response criticism. This study presupposes that the biblical authors wrote using particular strategies, especially for plot escalation and de-escalation that are employed to produce various rhetorical and aesthetic effects upon the implied reader. Therefore, in examining the literary techniques observed in the text, I will elucidate effects that will provoke the reader's sensitivities without entirely de-centering meaning from the text to the reader.

This raises the difficult subject of meaning and its complex interrelationship with text in our postmodern setting (cf. Vanhoozer 1998:98-140). To avoid this problem some have chosen to speak of 'significance' for the reader, and leave 'meaning' to the domain of the discarded author or the text (Crosman 1980:162). Because it is impossible to revisit this issue in its full scope here, I will assume that 'meaning' for a narrative analysis is centered on the text, but views the reader magnanimously, assuming that meaning will be manifold, perspectival, and multilayered, yet with some ideas having greater thematic significance than others as illustrated by textual indicators. Such an understanding of meaning resists reductionism, and as Vanhoozer (1998:326) affirms: '[A] text is thus a large-scale communicative act, a complex project of meaning.' Now having considered and accommodated the role of the reader, it is necessary to construe the nature of plot, the goal of this chapter's analysis.

6.3   The nature of plot

Since Aristotle (*Poet* 7), the basic elements of a well-crafted plot include a beginning, middle and end. Though Aristotle (*Poet* 18) already postulated the concepts of complication and denouement, these categories have commonly been expanded to five (exposition, complication, transforming action, denouement, and final situation), known as the quinary scheme (Marguerat & Bourquin 1999:43), which has become a standardized model for analyzing plots. Associated to the quinary scheme is 'Freytag's Pyramid', introduced by Gustav Freytag in *Technique of Drama* (1863), that envisions an initial rising action (often created by conflict and usually suspenseful), a climax, and a falling action as the suspense is unknotted (Abrams 2005:236). Amit (2001:48)

insightfully amalgamated the two ideas—Freytag's pyramid and the quinary scheme—

calling it a pediment structure, with elements analogous to the quinary scheme:

exposition, complication, change, unraveling, and ending. These highlight the triangular

pattern (pediment) formed by the raising action that places the emphasis of the plot on the

change or transforming action. However, Freytag himself divided the plot into nine units

(exposition, inciting moment, complication, climax, turning point, falling action,

resolution, last delay, and denouement); similar to the quinary scheme, but this

multiplicity of elements makes their separation and discernment unnecessarily enigmatic

(Ska 2000:20-21).

Two important narrative critics, each for their own reasons, have bypassed the

quinary scheme. Berlin (1983:101-102) adopts William Labov's model (derived from

socio-linguistic studies on inner city speech patterns) which offers a six part narrative

structure: abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, result or resolution, and

coda. Though similar to the quinary model, Labov's model lacks the clarity of the

quinary/pediment structure and is less analogous to the structure of biblical narratives.

Sternberg (1978:6) is critical of the pyramid model and Freytag's conception of

exposition, suggesting that it is far too simplistic and is not germane to much of classic

literature. Sternberg's argument, that exposition of the drama can be artfully scattered

throughout a narrative is well taken, for temporal reordering can highly skew the pyramid

scheme. However, because the quinary model is pyramidal in its simplest form,

practitioners should realize that it is a pliable model that can account for multiple peaks

and denouements. Further, the quinary scheme adapts well to many Hebrew narratives,

particularly Numbers 16 and 17, as the chronology has not been reordered and the story is

centered on conflict resolution (especially Numbers 16). Alter (1983:113) also notes the patterns that cultures develop in their system of storytelling: 'Every culture, even every era in a particular culture, develops distinctive and sometimes intricate codes for telling stories, involving everything from narrative point of view, procedures of description and characterization, the management of dialogue, to the ordering of time and the organization of plot.' The reader of the Hebrew Bible quickly discerns the features of biblical narrative that makes them unique, but that a reader's interest is engaged by conflicts, plot movement, and the dispensing of information are essentials for assessing the aesthetic quality of any story. Likewise, Wilson (1997:49) has elucidated the Hebrew (and other ANE texts) convention of oral typesetting which makes use of chiastic strategies for the advantage of memory and education: 'The idea of the center as the locus of the argument was an accepted convention of ancient rhetoric.' This indeed makes the quinary paradigm both suitable, incorporating a center stress, and sufficiently flexible, for this analysis of plot.

Structuralism and semiotics re-configured an approach to plot which in its divisions roughly corresponds to the quinary scheme but envisioned a deeper abstraction of sub-surface modes. A. J. Greimas (1966) developed a means of plot analysis on the infra-textual level and deeper levels of abstraction with six categories that include: initial situation, manipulation, competence, performance, sanction, final situation. These are more concerned with the modes of the subjects and objects of the story (Margerat & Bourquin 1999:49-52). This semiotic approach considers different questions than the quinary model and at times superimposes questions and abstractions that are not apropos (Ska 2000:31). In my estimation this approach is not advantageous for determining the

aesthetic affects upon the reader. Forcing biblical material into abstract categories is a common complaint made by biblical scholars leveled against the methods of both structuralism and formalism (Milne 1986:44). Having divested the semiotic approach on theoretical grounds, I will quickly bypass the detailed matter of temporal ordering on practical grounds.

Temporal ordering is a significant issue for discourse analysis as various strategies of chronology are possible with the sequence of a given plot. However this is not relevant to Numbers 16 and 17 which follows an orderly chronological sequence covering four days or possibly more, with only one questionable gap between Numbers 16:50 and Numbers 17:1. Numbers 16 encompasses the first day of rebellion in which a test was proposed for the following day. Day two includes: God's appearance and the two judgments against the rebels. Numbers 16:41 provides a temporal marker placing the plague and Aaron's intercession on day three. The only possible temporal break is at Numbers 17:1 where there is no specific indication of temporal resumption in the text, except for the *waw* consecutive (וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵּאמֹר) [MT Nm 17:16], which may or may not be translated temporally as 'then'. Most translations render this *waw* as non-temporal ('The Lord said….') leaving the matter indeterminate (KJV, NKJV, NIV, RSV, NRSV). However, the matter is inconsequential, for the temporal gap does not affect the plot, nor are there signs of a later reference to the gap. Therefore, with Numbers 17:8 advancing the plot by one further day, (and possibly one gap presumed to be inconsequentially short), the action of Numbers 16 and 17 is temporally compact, somewhat remarkably so considering the amount of action and the expansive amount of time that these two chapters represent (about 38 years from Numbers 14:45 to Numbers

20:1). Having clarified the central theoretical issues related to plot, I will introduce several key features of plot specific to Numbers 16 and 17.

6.4   Introduction to the plot of Numbers 16 and 17

The overall story presented in Numbers 16 and 17 substantially adheres to the quinary scheme, with three complete plot movements from exposition to final situation. With three complete literary units, Fokkelman (1999:156) would define Numbers 16 & 17 as an act because the sequence of stories share a common theme, and in this case, are obviously framed by law units. Knierim and Coats (2005:204-206) likewise divide Numbers 16 and 17 into three units but trace a more simplistic pyramidal scheme of exposition, complication, resolution, and conclusion. The initial interlaced plotline is traced through the overlapping rebellions of Korah and his followers (P) with that of Dathan & Abiram (JE) (Nm 16:1-40). The second plotline is united to the first with the community continuing the protestations made by Korah, and in a formulaic fashion, this plot follows the pattern of the previous story. Beginning with the people's grumbling against Moses and Aaron, followed by intercessory prayer, the initiation of a plague that was in turn mediated by Moses and Aaron resulting in 14,700 Israelite deaths (Nm 16:41-50). The final plotline recommences the question of Aaron's legitimate claim to the priesthood and is answered through a test in which God miraculously answers in the affirmative (Nm 17:1-13). An examination of these movements will manifest the intensity of the anticipated emotional involvement of the implied reader.

In the case of Numbers 16, the source of dramatic tension for the two units surrounds the unspoken but ominous potential for severe punishment to the rebels and the

entire community, even to the point of death—as death was previously the recompense for such insurgency. Though not employing the methods of high structuralists; it is helpful to consider the underlying currents in this dramatic narrative (Aichele 1995:70-83). Structuralists, beginning with Ferdinand de Saussure, Claude Levi-Strauss, and A. J. Greimas, search for deep structure: that is, the theoretical constructs that lie beneath and also unify the elements of the text. Such theoretical constructs are implied in Korah's challenge against Moses and Aaron. His search for power becomes a question of life and death beginning with himself, then his co-conspirators, and then trickling down to the community. Though the issues of power and death are not addressed propositionally or formally within the content of the story, it is the very prospect of wrath against the rebels and the Israelite community that heightens the suspense and impact of this entire crisis.

Furthermore, the lexis of key words in Numbers 16 and 17 (some carrying into chapter 20) likewise heighten the attention of the reader, and hence, the dramatic effect of the plot: 'to draw near' (Nm 16:5, 9, 10, 40; 17:13), 'holy' or 'sanctify' (Nm 16:3, 5, 7, 37, 38), 'to choose' (Nm 16:5, 7; 17:5) and, 'to die' or 'put to death' (Nm 16:13, 29, 41, 48; 17:10, 13). The collective theme of these words represents the theological heartbeat of Exodus to Deuteronomy: holiness and death (Mann 1988:133). This cluster of foundational words is nestled within these stories as an intentional strategy used by the author to produce drama and to cause the reader to reflect on the relation between the overarching themes of the book of Numbers and the plot of the rebellion (Alter 1981:95).

All stories are mediated to the reader by the author, and this mediation is accomplished by the intentional use of literary strategies, especially in narration but also in dialogue (Chatman 1978:33). Dramatic tension or suspense is best elevated when the

narrator employs dialogue and reduces narration (Amit 2001:51), or in the case of Numbers 16 and 17, where narration sets up the conflict and draws the battle lines, but is then heightened by the taunting dialogue. One complaint leveled against formalist critics is that they do not consider the reader's engagement with the text until the end of the work (Fish 1980:3-4). Therefore, this analysis works to trace the reader's engagement with the text as a reading would progress temporally through the narrative. Nonetheless, in Numbers 16 and 17, there is considerable narration keeping the story dense, with dialogue used minimally, and only at critical junctures. This works well in this case because the quantity and intensity of the action is high.

Another significant issue in plot analysis is causation. While some plots are episodic, having little connection between its units, most plots tend to be unified, particularly in a chain of cause and effect—one thing leading to another. Consequently, when working backwards, one can detect the *raison d'être* in one event in a previous event. Establishing causation is a normal activity of readers and they will tend to provide it, even if it is only covertly present (Chatman 1978:45, 46). Readers tend to construct causations either by the perception of a character trait (he said that because he is arrogant), or by some impersonal or universal law of human behavior (he is angry because he is jealous) (Todorov 1980:74-75). Such consideration for plot analysis is best left to the end as a way of evaluating and assessing 'first causes,' arguably the most common way of explaining all human activity and history. Causation in Korah's rebellion story is accentuated in Numbers 16:1 with the terse fronting of Korah's action in assembling others against Moses. Here is how this analysis of the drama will proceed.

The story of Korah's rebellion will be divided according to the quinary model, and each section will be evaluated according to the features that accentuate the dramatic movement of the plot. While this study is focused on the discourse strategies used by the author, the content of the stories is intrinsically woven into the literary form and as Alonso-Schökel (1975:7) has demonstrated; '[t]he perfect separation between form and content is, in fact, impossible.' Furthermore, a responsible analysis of plot must balance both the form and the content of the story to apprehend the textual meaning. As respected rhetorical critic Trible (1994:92, cf. Amit 2001:68) has succinctly articulated: 'No form appears without content and no content without form. How a text speaks and what it says are mixed and mingled indissolubly to give meaning.' In the case of Numbers 16 and 17, the narrator made minimal use of structure and maximal use of action, narrator's commentary and dialogue to produce a bustling and gripping plot.

This analysis will trace the literary strategy of the implied author, in their categorical use of plot, and likewise explicate the resulting effect anticipated of the implied reader. In the course of this analysis there are many points of interest for historical, source, and form criticism that invite commentary, but these are not the focus of this analysis. Quite specifically, commentary shall be limited to literary conventions that signal plot movement and the anticipated affects upon its readership. Such analysis will manifest the compactness and effective artistry of the author that, in this narrative, evokes both dramatic effect and interest. Figure 2 provides a division of Numbers 16 and 17 into a quinary scheme, the type of plot, and the highlighted protagonist, for each of the three plotlines.

Figure 2

Quinary Scheme	Korah's Rebellion	The Plague against the Israelites	The Budding of Aaron's Rod
Exposition	16:1-2	16:41 [MT 17:6]	17:1-5 [MT 17:16-20]
Complication	16:3-30	16:42-46 [MT 17:7-11]	17:6-7 [MT 17:21-22]
Transforming Action	16:31-35	16:47 [MT 17:12]	17:8-9 [MT 17:23-24]
Denouement	16:36-38 [MT 17:1-3]	16:48 [MT 17:13]	17:10-11 [MT 17:25-26]
Final Situation	16:39-40 [MT 17:4-5]	16:49-50 [MT 17:14-15]	17:12-13 [MT 17:27-28]
Type of Plot	Resolution	Resolution	Revelatory
Highlighted Protagonist	Moses/God	Aaron/God	God

There are two predominant types of plot present: resolution (the undoing of a conflict), and revelatory (the expansion of the reader's knowledge). The first two plotlines (units) in Numbers 16 and 17 are resolution plots, operating on the pragmatic level and resolving a conflict, but the third is revelatory, augmenting the reader's knowledge (Marguerat & Bourquin 1999:56). The first two units, though not without a revelatory gain, are deeply committed to responding to the militant's challenge against God's established leaders and, by default, God himself. The artistry of the third and last story is that the proposed test is benign and does not pose a risk of penalty or calamity to the participants—certainly providing some calm to the reader after the storm of the previous chapter. Knierim and Coats (2005:214) describe this last story, the budding of Aaron's staff, as a report, functioning as an anecdote. Though they credit the section as having structure, they suggest it does not develop a plot surrounding the event. While they do identify the significant change in plot dynamics and the miraculous nature of the

unit using a test motif, interpreters should not ignore the priority of this story, nor its

efficacy as a whole and robust plot.

6.4   The first quinary plot scheme (Numbers 16:1-40)

6.4.1   Exposition (16:1-2)

16 Now Korah son of Izhar son of Kohath son of Levi, along with Dathan and Abiram
sons of Eliab, and On son of Peleth—descendants of Reuben—took [2] two hundred fifty
Israelite men, leaders of the congregation, chosen from the assembly, well-known men,
and they confronted Moses.

The exposition provides the foundational elements needed to launch the story in a

manner that does not confuse the reader. Specifically observed in biblical stories, the

exposition 'serves as an introduction to the action described in the narrative, supplying

the background information, introducing characters, informing us of their names, traits,

physical appearance, state of life and the relations obtaining among them, and providing

the other details needed for understanding the story' (Bar-Efrat 2004:111). The biblical

reader, accustomed to the economy of Hebrew narratives, will observe a consistent

minimalism in the exposition, often because the narrator expects the reader to have an

understanding of previous events and the general worldview created in the biblical story.

Normally here, the narrator supplies only the least amount of information needed to

proceed, with sometimes a morsel of detail that lends foresight (prolepsis) into the heart

of the story.

Aside from merely introducing the characters in this exposition of Korah's

rebellion, four elements stand out to the reader. First, Korah is presented with a linear

genealogy positioning him as a descendant of Levi, revealing his powerful familial status

and his potential for priestly leadership following the dictates of primogeniture. More

specifically, Milgrom (1990:129) cites the opinion of the rabbis, who note the short shrift to Korah based on his family lineage. 'According to the rabbis, Korah maintains that since the sons of Amram, the eldest of Kohath, assumed the leadership of the people (Moses) and the priesthood (Aaron), the position of the head of the family should have gone to himself, the eldest of the second son of Kohath. Instead it was given to Elizaphan son of Uzziel, the youngest son of Kohath…(cf. Ex 6:16-22).' While this may contribute to Korah's sense of anger and disappointment, it does seem that Korah is more intent on supplanting Aaron from the priesthood. Levine (1993:411) recognizes the intentional inclusion of the genealogy as a literary foreshadowing of the impending rancorous clash: 'Korah's full genealogy is supplied so as to set the stage for the internecine conflict among the Levites. He was the first cousin of Moses and Aaron.' Signaling developments that occur later in the plot is a strategy employed regularly but subtly in biblical expositions, using various means: structure, misplaced information, character description, or as in this case, by a genealogy (Bar Efrat 2004:111). Second, a shorter segmented genealogy presents Dathan, Abiram, and On as Reubenites whose paterfamilias, Reuben, the firstborn of Jacob was passed over and defamed due to his sexual liaison with his step mother (Gn 49:3-4), also an act perceived to annex power from his father and over his brothers (Cole 2000:262). The reference to their tribal identity, though common in Hebrew narratives but not without design, may signify the motives of the Reubenite militants, their perception of being unfairly jilted, or at least in an ancillary way, to call attention to their geographical location near to the Kohathites in the camp's tribal arrangement (Nm 2:10; 3:29) a proximity that may signal the seeping influence of the rebellion. Third, the 250 men 'chosen from the assembly, well-known

men' (קְרִאֵי מוֹעֵד אַנְשֵׁי־שֵׁם) [MT Nm 16:2] are qualified in this way so as to exalt their social status among the Israelites, not being commoners, rabble, or fools, but men of standing, intensifying the seriousness of their complaint. Last, the truncated verbal expression of the rebellion 'took' (וַיִּקַּח) [MT Nm 16:1], lacking an object, is troubling syntactically for commentators but its terseness signals the austere nature of the conflict. Based on two elements, Cole (2000:261) postulates this construction was intended by the author to signal the inappropriate attempt of Korah to 'take' control. First, the introductory formula in Numbers 16:1 is abbreviated and entirely different from other introductory formulas for the cycles in Cole's configuration (Nm 1:1; 7:1; 10:11; 20:1; 26:1; 31:1). Second, in contrast to Korah 'taking' in Numbers 16:1, it is God who is 'taking' (לָקַחְתִּי) [MT Nm 18:6] the Levites and placing them in the service of the priesthood in Numbers 18:6 in the first legal section after the revolt. The juxtaposition of the 'taking' between these two verses demonstrates how preposterous was Korah's attempt to usurp authority while God was the rightful 'taker.'

6.4.2 Complication (16:3-30)

[3] They assembled against Moses and against Aaron, and said to them, "You have gone too far! All the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. So why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?" [4] When Moses heard it, he fell on his face. [5] Then he said to Korah and all his company, "In the morning the LORD will make known who is his, and who is holy, and who will be allowed to approach him; the one whom he will choose he will allow to approach him. [6] Do this: take censers, Korah and all your company, [7] and tomorrow put fire in them, and lay incense on them before the LORD; and the man whom the LORD chooses shall be the holy one. You Levites have gone too far!" [8] Then Moses said to Korah, "Hear now, you Levites! [9] Is it too little for you that the God of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel, to allow you to approach him in order to perform the duties of the LORD's tabernacle, and to stand before the congregation and serve them? [10] He has allowed you to approach him, and all your brother Levites with you; yet you seek the priesthood as well! [11] Therefore you and all your company have gathered together against the LORD. What is Aaron that you rail against him?" [12] Moses sent for Dathan and

Abiram sons of Eliab; but they said, "We will not come! [13] Is it too little that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey to kill us in the wilderness, that you must also lord it over us? [14] It is clear you have not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey, or given us an inheritance of fields and vineyards. Would you put out the eyes of these men? We will not come!" [15] Moses was very angry and said to the LORD, "Pay no attention to their offering. I have not taken one donkey from them, and I have not harmed any one of them." [16] And Moses said to Korah, "As for you and all your company, be present tomorrow before the LORD, you and they and Aaron; [17] and let each one of you take his censer, and put incense on it, and each one of you present his censer before the LORD, two hundred fifty censers; you also, and Aaron, each his censer."

[18] So each man took his censer, and they put fire in the censers and laid incense on them, and they stood at the entrance of the tent of meeting with Moses and Aaron. [19] Then Korah assembled the whole congregation against them at the entrance of the tent of meeting. And the glory of the LORD appeared to the whole congregation. [20] Then the LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying: [21] Separate yourselves from this congregation, so that I may consume them in a moment. [22] They fell on their faces, and said, "O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one person sin and you become angry with the whole congregation?"

[23] And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: [24] Say to the congregation: Get away from the dwellings of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. [25] So Moses got up and went to Dathan and Abiram; the elders of Israel followed him. [26] He said to the congregation, "Turn away from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, or you will be swept away for all their sins." [27] So they got away from the dwellings of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; and Dathan and Abiram came out and stood at the entrance of their tents, together with their wives, their children, and their little ones. [28] And Moses said, "This is how you shall know that the LORD has sent me to do all these works; it has not been of my own accord: [29] If these people die a natural death, or if a natural fate comes on them, then the LORD has not sent me. [30] But if the LORD creates something new, and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up, with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into Sheol, then you shall know that these men have despised the LORD."

In this first and longest of the three complications, three episodes are vaguely discernible (Nm 16:3-17; Nm 16:18-22; Nm 16:23-35), because as often is the case 'the biblical narrative is not diffuse, but is cohesive, concise and very tightly constructed' (Bar-Efrat 2004:96). The three episodes are cramped together making them difficult to divide. While change in character usually marks scene changes, in this narrative, temporal and spatial markers provide the best indicators. In the first episode (Nm 16:3-17), the rebels, lead by Korah, confront Moses, and Moses responded by urgently

prostrating himself in prayer. Then the dialogue seems to ensue immediately, as no temporal indicators are provided, with Moses addressing the rebels. Again, with great literary efficiency, Moses seems to have sent a messenger to Dathan and Abiram, and received their swift and smug response with the quotation provided by the narrator so that the reader receives the information concurrently with Moses for added affect. After Moses' rejoinder in prayer, he turned to give instructions to the original audience, Korah and his malcontents. While some may want to break this scene into smaller units based on the change of action (dialogue-prayer-dialogue) and change of participants (Korah and company-God-Dathan and Abiram-God-Korah and company), the concentric structure seems to be held together by the assumed consistency in location and temporal frame.

The second episode (Nm 16:18-22), includes a temporal movement to the following day, and begins with a narratorial explanation that Korah and company followed their instructions and were poised with the whole congregation before the tabernacle. God then appeared majestically, prepared to exterminate the entire community. But Moses and Aaron interceded, seemingly with positive results, though this is somewhat indeterminate for the first time reader.

The third episode (Nm 16:23-35), which actually includes the transforming action (Nm 16:31-35), is demarcated by a change in location, moving to the tents of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, focusing the attention of the community to the impending calamity.

Several features of this entire complication in three episodes provide for the mounting dramatic tension beyond the obvious insubordination of Korah and his followers. Each of these elements in the story serves the plot by escalating the conflict and heightening the reader's sensitivities to the impending calamitous judgment.

1. Numbers 16:3   The accusation (רַב־לָכֶם) [MT Nm 16:3] that Moses and Aaron

had overstepped their authority, perhaps being pretentious (Gray 1903:197) but probably

best understood as Noth (1968:123) suggests, they were accused of 'exalting themselves'

(Budd 1984:186) equivalent to the words used later in the verse—an accusatorial

question (וּמַדּוּעַ תִּתְנַשְּׂאוּ עַל־קְהַל יְהוָה) [MT Nm 16:3]. The phrase (רַב־לָכֶם) also

carries a sense of severe criticism (Levine 1993:412; cf. esp. Dt 3:26; Ezk 44:6; 45:9).

Of course, any reader of the biblical story would judge this charge to be preposterous,

and left wondering how Korah could have taken such a biased view of events, unless he

was influenced externally by wrong information or was internally motivated by jealousy

or ambition. Not to be out done, Dathan and Abiram later echo a similar complaint (Nm

16:13) suggesting that Moses was behaving as a despot: 'that you must also lord it over

us?' (כִּי־תִשְׂתָּרֵר עָלֵינוּ גַּם־הִשְׂתָּרֵר) [MT Nm 16:13], using an emphatic *hithpael*

infinitive absolute.

2. Numbers 16:3   The assertion by Korah that the whole community was holy (Nm

16:3) is likewise laughable in light of previous events in the book—this statement is more

surprising to the reader than adversarial. Milgrom (1989:131) inventively suggests that

Korah falsely understood the previous divine exhortation and was applying the injunction

from Numbers 15:40 where Israel was told to wear tassels (לְמַעַן תִּזְכְּרוּ וַעֲשִׂיתֶם

אֶת־כָּל־מִצְוֺתָי וִהְיִיתֶם קְדֹשִׁים לֵאלֹהֵיכֶם:) [MT Nm 15:40] but the clause,

using three perfects, is anticipatory, suggesting the future potential of Israel's

consecration is based on their covenant obedience. It is difficult to be certain if Korah

truly misunderstood this statement, but minimally Korah miscalculated the community's

performance in comparison to God's expectations.

3. Numbers 16:6-7   This ritual challenge to Korah and his followers involving the censer (Nm 16:6-7), should trigger an intertextual connection within the reader to the trenchant judgment against Nadab and Abihu (Lv 10:1-3) who were in some way indiscriminate in going before Yahweh with 'unauthorized fire' in their censers. Various opinions are in circulation regarding their exact misdeed (drunkenness, incorrect elements in the incense, a disobedient heart, or fire used from outside the tabernacle, etc) due to the brevity of the description with no narratorial explanation. Perhaps the exact nature of their sin was intentionally left indeterminate by the author to cause the reader to reflect pensively about appropriate conduct in the ritual worship of God. Though the particular sin(s) of Nadab and Abihu may not be the same as that anticipated by Korah's followers, this test involving the incense burner, established for ritual purposes, intensifies the gravity of the ordeal. The analogous nature of these two scenarios suggests that a similarly severe outcome may also be impending against Korah and his fellow militants—creating anticipation and suspense, particularly for the first-time reader.

4. Numbers 16:7   The corresponding retort of Moses (רַב־לָכֶם) [MT Nm 16:7] toward the Levites, probably the predominant tribal affiliation amongst these rebels, suggests Moses' annoyance and indignation with his accusers and ramps up the emotional tension between the participants and perceived by the reader.

5. Numbers 16:10   Also in Moses' response to the rebels (Nm 16:10), Moses interprets the challenge of Korah to be an ambitious attempt to usurp control of the priesthood. Certainly the institution of Israel's priesthood was still in its infancy, yet the Aaronide priesthood was publicly established by God through Moses (Ex 28:1-4; Lv 7-8). Though Korah apparently questioned the appointment of Aaron and his sons, the

reader is taken by the reckless ambition displayed in Korah for aspiring to a position that, in this era, was established by divine ordination (Duke 2003:647).

6. Numbers 16:12-14   In the indirect reported speech of Dathan and Abiram, a threefold complaint is leveled against Moses that includes incompetence, abuse of authority, and deception (Nm 16:12-14). The first charge surrounds Moses' general failure to successfully escort the people into the new land. Dathan and Abiram's retort begins with the same particle, with interrogative (ט   הַמְעַ) [MT Nm 16:13], that Moses used against the Levites in Numbers 16:9 as their rancorous way to express their determination to match the fervor of Moses' scrutiny (Wenham 1981:136). Additionally, this phasing ('is it too little…') is an antithetical reversal of the previous banter initiated by all the rebels in Numbers 16:3 ('too much to you'), then reciprocated by Moses back against the Levites in Numbers 16:7 (Alter 2004:763). As Moses had repeated רַב־לָכֶם back to the Levites, so Dathan and Abiram retorted ט   הַמְעַ back at Moses in Numbers 16:13—both connoting a rather undefined quantity either, in surplus, or lacking. This again emphasizes the ability of the priestly writers who not only merged the two narrative elements of the plot almost seamlessly, but also braided literary elements to the delight and benefit of the reader.

Implicit in the community's experience of the desert years was their mounting impatience as they grappled with the hardships of the wilderness, but even so, they completely misdirected the causation of their extended journey in the desert. Even though the community was informed through Moses at a theophonic event (Nm 14:10), that their punishment was a result of their grumbling and lack of faith (Nm 14:26-35),

218

under the weight of wilderness difficulties, they turned their bitterness towards Moses

and his proposed personal inadequacy for the delay in proceeding to the Promised Land.

Also, the language of Dathan and Abiram's rejoinder was particularly incendiary

by calling Egypt 'a land flowing with milk and honey' (Nm 16:13). This was a formulaic

designation reserved for God's sacred gift of the Promised Land, but now profaned and

used as a mutinous jab. This may be explained by the community's shifting sentiments

concerning Egypt and the conditions under which they lived. Leveen (2002:218) has

observed the contradictory nature of memory in Numbers 10 and 11, specifically related

to the community's remembrance of Egypt (Nm 11:4-6). While memory was meant to be

a stabilizing force for the nation, to concretize their history and teachings, there are points

where the people's memory vacillates. The case in point is the people's complaining

about their diet of manna—probably combined with their general experience of hardship

in the wilderness—and consequently they conjure memories of exotic and free food that

they had access to in Egypt (fish, cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic), yet

forgetting their enslavement and severe oppression. This corrupted and corrupting

memory becomes dangerous to the community. Is this shifting memory of Egypt among

the community driving the statement of Dathan and Abiram that Moses had

unsuccessfully brought them 'up out of a land flowing with milk and honey'? It does

seem that this is the trajectory of the community's sentiment about Egypt as part of their

disillusionment with their journey and their leaders beginning in Numbers 11:4-6 and

continued in their willingness to appoint a new leader and return to Egypt (Nm 14:3-4).

While this discrepant image of Egypt may be latent in their minds, the precise usage of

the clause denoting the Promised Land is purposely contemptuous and astounding to the reader.

Furthermore, the import of the accusatory question: 'Would you put out the eyes of these men?' can have several connotations. The allusion to violence, something not evident in Moses' institutional leadership, may be a personal slight against Moses, reminding him of his past murderous attack on the Egyptian (Cole 2000:265). Or, more naturally, Milgrom (1989:134; cf. Budd 1984:187; Noth 1968:125-126) suggest the expression 'put out the eyes' is an idiom that implies Moses was trying to deceive, mislead, or blind 'these men', denoting either themselves, as Gray (1903:201) who suggests this is a periphrastic phrase to mean 'us', or alternatively denoting the elders that accompanied Moses (Milgrom 1989:134). The accusation that Moses is both a corrupt leader and a failure is astounding to the reader who naturally esteems Moses as a hero figure. Not only is the reader conditioned by the narrator's point of view—exemplified in Numbers 12 by Moses' ascribed special status as the supreme humble prophet—but also corroborated by the reader's own evaluation of Moses' performance within the biblical corpus of Numbers.

7. Numbers 16:14   The direct defiance of Dathan and Abiram in refusing twice (though natural to the concentric design of their reported speech, ABCC'B'A') to appear before Moses in response to his summons is another affront to Moses' authority (Nm 16:14) and further intensifies the acrimony between the rebels and Moses. Wenham (1981:136) suspects that Dathan and Abiram, though in agreement with the revolt, would not appear before Moses as to associate themselves with Korah because they feared the outcome would be the same as that as Nadab and Abihu (Cole 2000:265). However, this

is only speculation as the level of malice expressed in Dathan and Abiram's reply

suggests a rigorous intentionality for disobedience—in correlation to their complaint that

Moses' leadership was despotic.

The reader will also note the verbal irony in the words of the two rebels who

twice (Nm 16:12, 14) defiantly say they will 'not go up' (לֹ֣א נַעֲלֶ֑ה) [MT Nm 16:12, 14]

in response to Moses' summons (Magonet 1982:18; Sherwood 2002:165). Nor will the

pair 'go up' to the Promised Land, and in short order, they would 'go down' (וַיֵּרְד֤וּ)

[MT Nm 16:33] to their graves. Such ironic 'reversal of the surface statement' extends

the sense of pleasure and satisfaction to the reader (Abrams 2005:142), who especially in

this case, wants to defend Moses' authority and exact punishment on his detractors.

In Moses' petition to God in response—the instinct to pray during times of high

agitation alone points to his remarkable piety—his verbal response to their disobedience

is conspicuously restrained: 'Pay no attention to their offering. I have not taken one

donkey from them, and I have not harmed any one of them' (Nm 16:15). Rather than

castigating or threatening personal vengeance, Moses petitioned God for justice that

pertained to cultic and spiritual repercussions rather than civil or political ones. A similar

statement by Samuel, that he had not defrauded or stolen anyone's ox or donkey, is used

to publicly proclaim his uprightness and innocence (1 Sm 12:3). To 'not pay attention to

their offering' (מִנְחָתָ֑ם) [MT Nm 16:15], a general term for gift or tribute suggests their

consequence should be detrimental to their relationship to God. Alter (2004:765)

believes that the reference to 'an offering' was the impending censer offering for Korah

and his followers and was an erroneous harmonization caused at the compositional stage

when the two rebellion stories were merged. However, the generic use of 'offering'

221

(מִנְחָתָם ם), is not used in the description of the censer ordeal, nor is the language of the censer offering (draw near, holy, choose, fire, censer) directed towards Dathan and Abiram, suggesting a more pedestrian reference. Olson (1996:104) expects that this 'would signify the severing of the relationship between them and God', or tangentially, that the request by Moses is 'that Yahweh would withhold His favour' from Dathan and Abiram (Gray 1903:202), or perhaps in a similar vein, a reference to Genesis 4:4 where Cain's offering was not accepted (Levine 1993:414). Or, less proximate Noth (1968:126) feels this is a request to have Dathan and Abiram excluded from the community. Though somewhat indeterminate, the essence of Moses' appeal is a call for retribution on a spiritual and relational level, conceived to be more serious by Moses' standards, than the interests of human possession and power, which was seemingly desired by his retractors.

8. Numbers 16:19   With the scene change, Korah presumptuously gathered the entire community to witness, what he thinks will be a demotion of Moses and Aaron, and an installation of himself to power (Nm 16:19). Not surprising to the reader, God appears in splendor, and immediately threatens to destroy the entire community (Nm 16:21), as a pattern emerges within the book of Numbers that is analogous to Alter's type-scene convention (1981:51) in which patterns, often with significant variations, occur in similar events. Numbers 16:19-24 portrays the third of four such scenes, all of which include these elements: God being angered by the sin of one or more people, God making a theophonic appearance at the tabernacle, intercession, and concludes with God's judgment. Numbers 11:1-3 may even be a fourth, though truncated, the incident would qualify as the first type-scene but it lacks the theophany. What, then, is the variation in Numbers 16 that makes this worth exploring?

Unlike Numbers 12:1-6 and Numbers 14:10-19, in Numbers 16:19-24, Moses does not directly appeal for Korah's forgiveness along with the rest of the community. In Numbers 12:1-6, Miriam is punished for speaking against Moses, and naturally, Moses intercedes successfully mediating her return to health. In Numbers 14:10-19, even though the assembly was threatening Moses and Aaron with stoning, Moses petitioned God with a sustained diatribe asking for all encompassing forgiveness. Yet when it came to Moses' intercession in Numbers 16:22, he resorted to a rhetorical question: 'shall one person sin and you become angry with the whole congregation?' Moses is leveraging Korah's sin as the leader of the revolt in order to convince God to relent from punishing the rest of the community. Indirectly, Moses is suggesting that Korah should be the only one punished. As in the spy story (Nm 14:37), only those directly responsible were punished immediately (Wenham 1981:137). The fourth type-scene in Numbers 16:41-50 appears to return to the pattern of an all-embracing appeal, only to provoke attention to the variation in Numbers 16:19-24. Therefore, Moses' aversion to interceding for Korah's sin breaks the pattern of his normal comprehensive appeal for forgiveness and draws the reader's attention again to the depth of Korah's offense.

9. Numbers 16:27   Though the community distanced themselves from the tent dwellings of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, the narrator added the observation that Dathan and Abiram stood at the entrance of their tents, 'together with their wives, their children, and their little ones' (וּנְשֵׁיהֶם וּבְנֵיהֶם וְטַפָּם) [MT Nm 16:27] using three consecutive *waw* conjunctions for dramatic effect. This literary convention included by the writer creates a visual picture of these families in front of their tents adds a poignant and dramatic moment of calm just before the impending disaster. This addition has a

223

powerful impact on the reader, who could at this stage be harshly polarized against the rebels and forgetting the humanness of the characters—and the reader's own humanness. The addition of 'little ones' reminds the reader that these are real families involved, and sharing in that humanity, the reader is drawn closer to the conflict and the inevitable doom. The narrator's inclusion of these perceived 'innocent ones' heightens the stakes of this judgment and may even cause the reader to question the fairness of the impending retribution, again inflaming the reader's sensibilities.

10. Numbers 16:28   Last, Moses' imaginative test and punishment, the ground actually swallowing up the guilty, is a proposal that was unique to this community that had already experienced a plethora of signs and wonders, lending both drama and suspense to the complication. Moses presses the point that the judgment is not his doing, not even in his heart (כִּי־לֹא מִלִּבִּי) [MT Nm 16:28]; the judgment is the act of the God character. The theological question is then raised for the first-time reader: 'will God listen to a human?' But even for the experienced reader, it remains intriguing that a human could propose a unique and miraculous punishment and that God would bring it to fruition. The culmination of these ten dramatic features places the reader in a state of anticipation ready for resolution.

These ten elements in the story's content are what create the raising action of the plot, elevating the reader's emotional and intellectual engrossment. As the reader is enthralled at the pinnacle of the complication, the transforming action provides both a release of tension, a redirection of emotion, and an answer to how God would resolve such a rebellion.

6.4.3   The transforming action (16:31-35)

[31] As soon as he finished speaking all these words, the ground under them was split apart. [32] The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, along with their households—everyone who belonged to Korah and all their goods. [33] So they with all that belonged to them went down alive into Sheol; the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly. [34] All Israel around them fled at their outcry, for they said, "The earth will swallow us too!" [35] And fire came out from the LORD and consumed the two hundred fifty men offering the incense.

The power of this transforming action is paramount in the whole act of Numbers 16 and 17, not only because of the protracted complication, the swelling animosity and provocation brought on by the rebels, but by the immediate and decisive intervention of the God character in the transforming action. The narrator notes that the intervention happened right after Moses finished speaking, in order to starkly affirm that God was responding to the express declaration of Moses. Wenham (1981:136) and others have noted the irony connected to these two judgments: being swallowed by the earth, and burned by fire from the tabernacle. Dathan and Abiram accused Moses of bringing them out into the wilderness to die (Nm 16:13) and this becomes the specific and caustic outcome. Likewise, Korah and his followers, who wish to ascend to the priesthood, are consequently killed during a trial cultic service. These ironic elements intensify the satisfaction of the reader whose sense of injustice was inflamed by the behavior and words of the rebels. Further, the cavern judgment was both unique to the community's experience, and it entirely fulfilled the proposal spoken by Moses. The judgment not only served to sentence the offenders, but to pronounce again Moses' status as God's ordained leader.

The transforming action in this case is more than just a resolution to the complication but has a dramatic impact of its own. While the punishment is here directed

225

toward the rebels, it is the community's disposition that remains unresolved, creating a residual surplus of drama that pervades the narrative to end of Numbers 17 and beyond. The panic of the community (enhanced by the added representative group quotation: 'The earth will swallow us too!') is not directly addressed by the narrator either here or later in Numbers 16 and 17. This narratorial strategy, intentionally interjecting the community's fear, using dialogue, adds intensity. Additionally, leaving their status doubtful is unsettling to the reader and carries over some of the suspense from this scene into the subsequent ones. From the reader's point of view, the nation, though unruly and fickle, holds out hope for God's project to give them a land of their own as His chosen nation (Ex 19:6). Therefore, their destiny is important to the whole drama of the Pentateuch.

In a compact and somber statement (Nm 16:35), the narrator added that concurrent to the earth swallowing judgment, fire had consumed the other group of rebels who were waiting, presumably at the front of the tabernacle. The concise manner of the narrator's comment, common to many of these judgment descriptions (esp. Lv 10:2; Nm 11:1, 33; 14:37), comes as a consecutive blow in the flow of the literary stream, though different in nature (fire rather than earth swallowing), it creates an anticipated intertextual allusion to the deaths of Nadab and Abihu (Lv 10:1-11). A perceptive reader perhaps felt affirmed here that they forecasted the outcome for these unqualified and ambitious priestly hopefuls. Perhaps too, Korah and his followers involved the use of fire from outside the tabernacle but this was 'overshadowed by their yet more heinous sin of attempting to usurp the priestly function' (Haran 1978:233). Nonetheless, the destruction by fire is not only analogous to the earlier punishment of Nadab and Abihu, but an ironic talion as those who brought fire to worship were destroyed by fire. The use of fire also

sustains a symbolic force in making holy the censers, important for the instructive value of the denouement.

6.4.4   The denouement (16:36-38)

[36] Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: [37] Tell Eleazar son of Aaron the priest to take the censers out of the blaze; then scatter the fire far and wide. [38] For the censers of these sinners have become holy at the cost of their lives. Make them into hammered plates as a covering for the altar, for they presented them before the LORD and they became holy. Thus they shall be a sign to the Israelites.

For the reader, this compressed denouement provides instruction and explanation, as well as projecting a commemorative value for the generations to come. Eleazar was appropriately chosen for the gruesome task of collecting the censers from among the bodies of the insurgents, signaling to the community again that Aaron's family would retain God's approval for priestly service. Even though these censers were carried by undesignated usurpers, they were made holy by fire, as they had been presented before God. Gray (1903:209) suggests the censers were holy because of the physical proximity ('contracted holiness') to the tabernacle and to God, however Levine (1993:419) counters that the holiness is ascribed because the gift became God's property—but the manner is insignificant here as God proclaimed the censers holy and the exact merit does not affect the reading. Symbolically, fire is representative of God's wrath and holiness, and these images come together as the fire brought destruction and also made the censers holy (Van Broekhoven 1982:305). This denouement not only releases the tension of the transforming action, but provides an instructive and tidy untangling of the serious judgment encountered by the reader.

6.4.5   The final situation (16:39-40)

[39] So Eleazar the priest took the bronze censers that had been presented by those who were burned; and they were hammered out as a covering for the altar— [40] a reminder to the Israelites that no outsider, who is not of the descendants of Aaron, shall approach to offer incense before the LORD, so as not to become like Korah and his company—just as the LORD had said to him through Moses.

The final situation, noting Eleazar's compliance to God's instructions and specifically the explanatory insertion by the narrator, are intentionally pedagogical, meant to have lasting educational force for generations that would follow. With the censers being converted into a cover for the altar of burnt offering they became a grim and reverential memorial for the whole community of the severe punishment for would be encroachers (Cole 2000:270). The ironic force of the lasting imagery of the bronze cover on the altar is well stated by Milgrom (1989:140): 'The same fire pan that brought death to the unauthorized 250 averts death in the hands of the authorized.'

What is unique about this plot, which is perhaps the most intense of these three scenes, is the instructive force of the overall resolution with the admonition clearly enunciated by the narrator—often rare in biblical narrative. Emphasized in this narratorial addition is the impassible divide between Aaron's descendants, and Korah, a Levite from a family of standing, yet who is by inference and contrast called a 'stranger' or 'outsider' (אֲשֶׁר זָר) [MT Nm 17:5]. This broadens the distance between the Aaronide priesthood and the entire nation. The inclusion of the lesson lends clarity and resolution to the reader who is not left questioning the real import of this serious judgment.

6.5   Second quinary plot scheme (Numbers 16:41-50)

6.5.1 The exposition (16:41)

[41] On the next day, however, the whole congregation of the Israelites rebelled against Moses and against Aaron, saying, "You have killed the people of the LORD."

The change of scene is here marked by the temporal movement to the next day and the involvement of the whole community in rebellion against Moses and Aaron, apparently without a leader this time. What is immediately remarkable to the reader, and this may even begin the complication, is the accusation of the people against Moses. The statement is ludicrous on three accounts. First, even though the people witnessed the extraordinary destruction of the two groups of rebels, they were not fearful of an impending judgment for their own rebellious machinations. Second, their accusatory accreditation of Moses with the power to kill the rebels, either on his own or by his influence upon God, is shocking considering his loyalty to the people and his persistent defense of the people before God. Last, that the rebels in total are attributed the title of 'the people of the Lord' (אֶת־עַם יְהוָה) [MT Nm 17:6] is outlandish in contrast to the point of view of the narrator, and thus the reader. This suggests that the community's allegiance has swung from favoring God's chosen leaders to the self promoted pseudo-leaders who were publicly and miraculously annihilated. Readers can only be dumbfounded at the community's misjudgment and audacity to voice such a complaint after witnessing the severe repercussions imposed upon the rebels. This gross divergence of perspective between the reader and 'the community' within the narrative creates a sense of wonder and intrigue that elicits interest within the reader.

6.5.2 The complication (16:42-46)

229

[42] And when the congregation had assembled against them, Moses and Aaron turned toward the tent of meeting; the cloud had covered it and the glory of the LORD appeared. [43] Then Moses and Aaron came to the front of the tent of meeting, [44] and the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, [45] "Get away from this congregation, so that I may consume them in a moment." And they fell on their faces. [46] Moses said to Aaron, "Take your censer, put fire on it from the altar and lay incense on it, and carry it quickly to the congregation and make atonement for them. For wrath has gone out from the LORD; the plague has begun."

In this complication, tension is again fostered by the potential decimation of the grumbling congregation. God threatened to consume (וַאֲכַלֶּה) [MT Nm 17:10] them, though a commonly used idiom suggesting destruction, this conception was used specifically in the previous two judgments in this chapter. Dathan, Abiram and their families were destroyed when 'the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up' (Nm 16:30, 32), and Korah and his followers were consumed (וַתֹּאכַל) [MT Nm 16:35] by fire. This language is perhaps intentionally meant to echo the slanderous report of the spies that Canaan 'devours (אֹכֶלֶת) its inhabitants' [MT Nm 13:32] as a verbal harpoon against their malicious portrayal of God's gift for the nation (Olson 1996:107). The community should have taken God's appearance and the threat of 'consumption' as a signal to repent and submit to God, but the narrator's silence suggests a passive response by the people.

As previously observed, this appears to be the fourth and last in a string of 'type-scenes' (theophany appearance at the tabernacle and intercession by the heroes) in which there is a variation in the events (Nm 16:42-50). The variation comes at the end of the sequence as Moses dispatched Aaron into the midst of the dying masses to intercede using his censer. This deviation from the pattern of the previous three type-scenes attracts the reader's attention and highlights the action of Aaron in ministering with the censer, exalting his position as the brave and efficacious high priest (Milgrom 1989:142).

This atoning work of Aaron also serves as an excellent transition into the next plot, as again Aaron will be featured as the highlighted protagonist (see figure 2), the human hero and chosen priestly leader.

The direction for Aaron to enter the fray with the censer was provided by the narrator in a quotation from Moses that gives direction, but does not supply the source or rationale for the action. This leaves several questions: did Moses receive these directions from the Lord? Did he observe that a plague had begun among the people or was this information also divinely provided? Was this idea of taking a censer into the community an imaginative test initiated by Moses or God? Harrison (1990:241) and more strongly Alter (2004:770) expect that this action was according to Moses' own intuition as it was not precipitated by specific prayer and was in accordance with the cultic stipulations of the high priest's intercessory function already established. Ashley (1993:328) postulates that because atonement is normally accomplished through a blood sacrifice, that perhaps this unconventional intercession was prescribed by God. But Ashley rightly concludes that the matter is conjectural. Taking up the censer a second time in this chapter connects the deliverance of the survivors to the authorized use of the censer by Aaron. But in contrast to the destruction against the censer totting rebels, Aaron's offering was accepted. His intercession appeased the wrath of God and was ultimately life-giving to at least a large portion of the community. The obvious difference between the two offerings was that the approved protagonist was making the offering—in this case, Aaron, God's chosen representative. This scene presents a powerful and dramatic image to the reader that depicts Aaron ministering amongst the dying community.

6.5.3 The transforming action (16:47)

[47] So Aaron took it as Moses had ordered, and ran into the middle of the assembly, where the plague had already begun among the people. He put on the incense, and made atonement for the people.

This image of Aaron to the Israelites, his active intercession with the censer, not only signals to the congregation the effectual power of Aaron's office and person, but also another attestation that Aaron and his descendants are predestined to hold the high priestly office. As is the pattern with Aaron, in terms of plot dynamic, he is treated as more of an object than a subject. In Numbers 16 and 17, even in chapter 17 where Aaron is in the limelight, he is not given a consciousness by the narrator, neither by narratorial description, nor with any dialogue. This strategy, which one has to think is an intentional omission, suppresses the reader's access to Aaron's inner feelings and motivation, either positive or negative. Aaron is represented in this case as an obedient brother and dutiful servant to God in fulfilling this risky duty—a duty that perhaps risked his own well-being, but certainly risked contact with dead bodies, an act that was especially defiling for the high priest (Gray 1903:212). Aaron was directed to act, not specifically because he was reluctant, though we have no way of knowing, but because this was an entirely new situation, as previously a plague had not been halted by intercession with the censer.

6.5.4 The denouement (16:48)

[48] He stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stopped.

The terseness of this statement is both poetic and dramatic as it places Aaron in the nexus and makes him the unmistakable mediator and the very arbiter of life and

death. With the plague being stopped, there is an immediate calm brought to the reader, as at least for now, the community will endure.

In this passage, Aaron's incense ministry stopped a plague with an intercessory act whilst the plague was in progress and as L'Heureux (1990:86) observes, this only happens one other time in Numbers (Nm 21:4-9) with Moses' intercessory prayer just before the erection of the standard and serpent. Though not counted by L'Heureux, perhaps because the intercession was by violence rather than sacrosanct means, was Phinahas' spearing of Zimri and Cozbi at Shittim which halted a plague after the death of 24,000 Israelites (Nm 25:9-9). Aaron's actions in some way prefigure the potential for mid plague intercession—an inauguration of hope for people, found only in the priesthood, for generations to come.

6.5.5   The final situation (16:49-50)

[49] Those who died by the plague were fourteen thousand seven hundred, besides those who died in the affair of Korah. [50] When the plague was stopped, Aaron returned to Moses at the entrance of the tent of meeting.

This final situation possesses two dramatic features that on one hand concludes the plot sequence, but on the other, sustains the sobering effects of the climax. First, the narratorial insertion provides a death toll to shock the reader by the scale of the calamity (Nm 16:49). Second, the final note that Aaron returned to Moses is picturesque—like the hero riding into the sunset. Also, there is a temporary reversal of roles in this scene as normally Moses is the obvious and undisputed hero, even in comparison to his brother. However, in this case, Aaron, the hero returns to his accomplice and to his post, at the entrance to the tent of meeting (אֶל־פֶּ תַ חַ אֹ הֶל מ ׂ וﬠֵ ד) [MT Nm 17:15]. Aaron is

a strange hero here, a hollow character, having no words and projecting no will of his own, but just following instructions—more of a passive instrument than an outgoing champion. It may be that the office of the priesthood in Aaron's family is vindicated more than the actual man himself. Throughout this act, the entrance to the tent of meeting is the place where God authoritatively appears and meets with his servants. Cole (2000:272-273) has demonstrated how this movement back to the tabernacle was necessary to complete the chiastic structure of the unit. Though, the parallel elements do not correlate very logically, there is a center stress, and the spatial movement out from the tabernacle and back again possesses a spatial symmetry that has its own sense of drama, beginning and ending at the tabernacle, the home base for God's sanctioned ministers.

6.6   Third quinary plot scheme (Numbers 17:1-13)

6.6.1   The exposition (17:1-5)

17 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: [2] Speak to the Israelites, and get twelve staffs from them, one for each ancestral house, from all the leaders of their ancestral houses. Write each man's name on his staff, [3] and write Aaron's name on the staff of Levi. For there shall be one staff for the head of each ancestral house. [4] Place them in the tent of meeting before the covenant, where I meet with you. [5] And the staff of the man whom I choose shall sprout; thus I will put a stop to the complaints of the Israelites that they continually make against you.

The narratorial connection between Numbers 16 and 17 could be called into question here, as the story of Numbers 17, lacks a clear temporal marker or transition. Beginning with the common formulaic introduction (וַיְדַבֵּ ר יְהוָ ה אֶל־מ שֶׁ ה לֵאמ ר) [MT Nm 17:16], does not provide a specific temporal connection with what

precedes. Furthermore, Numbers 17 is a complete unit and stands alone as a story, and could be moved to a different station as it is not dependent on what is before it and is not critical for what follows. Nevertheless, Numbers 17 does provide greater clarity and further affirmation supporting the Aaronic priesthood, and espouses a more powerful validation following on the heels of the quashed uprising. Also, Numbers 18 deals with levitical and priestly matters, while the loose structure of the book would not make the relocation of Numbers 17 prohibitive, the established location does aid the thematic development. Consequently, enjoining Numbers 17 to 16, as a companion to the plotline creates a triadic plot scheme that inflates the dramatic benefit to the reader. The plot of this third story is revelatory rather than resolving a conflict, so different that Knierim and Coats (2005:214) say: 'the unit is a report, designed only to recount an event of general interest rather than to develop a plot around the event' and they go on to suggest that the story's plot cannot be analyzed. However, the plot in this case does not involve the development of a conflict and its subsequent resolution. Here, the 'test motif' creates an informational interest in the exposition and complication that is resolved in the results of the test.

In this more lengthy exposition, God initiated a test that had the expressed intention of ending the grumbling amongst the Israelites about their leaders. The test was a departure from the ritualistic implement, the censer, to the staff, a symbol of authority (a staff was used in the confrontation with Pharaoh, Ex 9:23, and in fighting the Amalekites, Ex 17:9, and in bringing water from the rock, Ex. 17:5). As Alter (1981:55) has elucidated a motif of 'stones' in the life of Jacob, so too Exodus and Numbers presents a metaphorical or thematic relationship between the protagonists and their staffs.

The author artistically played on the two lexical meanings of (מַטֶּה) tribe and (מַטֶּה) rod (Cole 2000:274) as a means of sparking the reader's need to appraise the author's usage of the word with each recurrence. In Numbers 17, מַטֶּה is used as a theme-word (as per Fox 2004:14) used 16 times in a manner that keeps the word before the reader, forcing the reader to assess the contextual usage of the word. Yet in this case, the author alternates its usage and does not allow the word to clearly settle on one lexical meaning. The author was careful not to confuse the denotation of the two expressions by adding expressions to מַטֶּה with variations of 'from the house of the father' (לְבֵית אָב) [MT Nm 17:17, 21, 23] or 'from the head of the house of their fathers' (לְרֹאשׁ בֵּית אֲבֹתָם) [MT Nm 17:18] when referring to a 'tribe' rather than a 'staff'. 'Hebrew *matteh* also means "tribe," as in 1:16. The staff was the official insignia of a tribal chieftain (see Gen. 49:10). But it also designated the ordinary walking stick (Gen. 38:18, 25), which in ancient Babylonia bore a distinctive design to designate its owner' (Milgrom 1989:143). The use of the staff as an identity marker correlates well with its use here as a designate for each of the tribes before the Lord. Though מַטֶּה is used lexically throughout the chapter as 'staff', it is thematically associated to its tribal distinction—a discourse strategy that intensifies the reader's engagement with the story.

The usual questions posed here surround the function of a staff and the incongruent number of tribes involved in the test: were there twelve or thirteen rods? The two common answers to the latter are that there were thirteen (Gray 1903:214), or that the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh were elided into the tribe of Joseph making twelve (Milgrom 1989:143). Furthermore, several commentators take issue with the previous uses of the rods; were they common walking sticks or were they a sign of

authority (Ashley 1993:331)? These types of questions may be important to the historical

critic but either answer is inconsequential for the reader, as this matter is not at the crux

of the test, nor does the indeterminacy create a disruption to reading the text.

The lasting nature of this test's outcome and the import of Numbers 17 are

antithetical to the two rebellion stories of Numbers 16. Though Noth (1968:130-131)

calls the rod a 'constantly available sign', he then expresses his doubt that the rod ever

existed, probably referred to in this late text because it had been previously destroyed.

But as the censers were collected by Eleazar and hammered on to the altar as an ongoing

warning (Nm 16:40), the preservation of the budded staff provided a positive reminder to

the community of God's choice of Aaron's descendants and God's ability to bring life

rather than death. Brown (2002:152-155) details that the budded staff served in four

ways as a visible confirmation of the Aaronic priesthood: (1) the sign was *necessary* in

light of the severe challenge to the priesthood, (2) the sign was *educative*, related to the

need for discerning God's will through intercession at the tabernacle, (3) the sign was

continuing to be kept as a visible memorial, and (4) the sign was *graphic* combining a

depiction of the divine power of God with the symbolic force of fruitfulness. Though

Numbers 16 almost entirely pictured God as a bringer of judgment and death, Numbers

17 reverses this portrayal as here God brings to life that which was dead.

The expressed purpose of this test carried a dual focus. The first was to clarify,

yet again, to the community who God had chosen as their priestly paterfamilias. This

seems almost redundant to the reader in light of the previous chapter, but the over

abundance of evidence places a commensurate weight of responsibility for the

community to accept the Aaronide priesthood. The second purpose was to eliminate the

grumbling spirit of the community, a precursor to rebellion, which was an affront to God.

Ryken (1984:50-51) delineates the 'test motif' as a surprisingly common feature of

biblical narratives but focuses his analysis solely on human protagonists. In this case,

God puts himself to the test in order to illustrate his will and his ability.

6.6.2   The complication (17:6-7)

[6] Moses spoke to the Israelites; and all their leaders gave him staffs, one for each leader,
according to their ancestral houses, twelve staffs; and the staff of Aaron was among
theirs. [7] So Moses placed the staffs before the LORD in the tent of the covenant.

This complication lacks the type of dramatic tension instilled by conflict and

acrimony, displayed in the previous two scenes, but the use of a test provides its own

brand of interest. The concise and nearly repetitive report by the narrator that Moses

followed the instructions given by God creates a heightened expectancy that the

challenge would be answered. The ideologically committed biblical reader will not find

this test very demanding for God considering the kinds of signs and wonders previously

displayed. However, the transforming action will be more rousing because the result in

this case greatly exceeds the expectations of the reader.

Ryken (1984:50) asserts that the test motif is a common narrative strategy to

determine if the protagonist (usually) has the strength, resourcefulness, intellect, or piety

sufficient to the task. Such tests are another way that narrators inflame interest in a story

and create dramatic tension. In the narrative unit of Numbers 16 and 17, there are two

specific and clearly defined tests: Moses' proposed judgment by the earth swallowing the

rebels versus their death by old age, and the placing of tribal staffs into the tabernacle to

see if one, or any, for that matter, would sprout. Both tests were directed towards God,

the first imaginatively advanced by Moses, and the second proposed by God by himself.

6.6.3   The transforming action (17:8-9)

⁸ When Moses went into the tent of the covenant on the next day, the staff of Aaron for the house of Levi had sprouted. It put forth buds, produced blossoms, and bore ripe almonds. ⁹ Then Moses brought out all the staffs from before the LORD to all the Israelites; and they looked, and each man took his staff.

The surprise in this transforming action is the surpassing performance that

transcended the forecasted result in the exposition. While God predicted that he would

make a dead walking stick produce shoots, at the time of examination, the staff of Aaron

blossomed and produced almonds. Both the cadence and symmetry (three imperfect

verbs with *waw* consecutive, each followed by a single noun) of the narrator's description

of what Moses saw in the tabernacle, 'it put forth buds, produced blossoms, and bore ripe

almonds' (וַיֹּצֵא פֶרַח וַיָּצֵץ צִיץ וַיִּגְמֹל שְׁקֵדִים) [MT Nm 17:23],

highlight the impressiveness of the miraculous event by its literary flare. The narrator's

inclusion of the clause 'and they looked' (וַיִּרְאוּ) [MT Nm 17:24], a presumable

activity in the situation, highlights the validation of the extraordinary action of God by

the very leaders who might, at some point, ponder a challenge to the priestly office.

6.6.4   The denouement (17:10-11)

¹⁰ And the LORD said to Moses, "Put back the staff of Aaron before the covenant, to be kept as a warning to rebels, so that you may make an end of their complaints against me, or else they will die." ¹¹ Moses did so; just as the LORD commanded him, so he did.

It goes almost without saying that the reader is settled by the assurance given by

the narrator that Moses obeyed the instructions given to him (Nm 16:11). The

unmistakable pattern in biblical stories is that obedience brings blessing and peace, while disobedience invites punishment and acrimony. With the archiving of the budded staff, there is intended a signal that the Aaronide priesthood was secure, perhaps even that the staff and the ark itself shared the same fate, and that the miraculously budded staff would be a lasting symbol of God's powerful support for his elected leader.

God's twofold purpose for this test was expressed in Numbers 17:5 is repeated and reduced to a singular motive in verse ten. The singular explanation, and perhaps more primary, is more powerfully expressed with dialogue directly from God as: 'a warning to rebels, so that you may make an end of their complaints against me, or else they will die.' The locus of this test was not only to more clearly identify Aaron's family as the chosen priestly line, but to address the culture of complaining that had gripped the Israelite encampment. More literally, the phrase describing the nation, 'sons of rebellion' (לִבְנֵי־מֶ רִי) [MT Nm 17:25], is used nowhere else in the Old Testament (Gray 1903:217). The nomination is a variance of 'sons of Israel', and is expressly derogative, reflecting the level of God's exasperation with the Israelites. God's disenchantment with the Israelites and their grumbling is not hidden, nor is his determination to end the pervasive attitude of discontent amongst the people. The threat of death was not to be taken lightly as God had publicly demonstrated his tenacity in putting to death the frontline leaders of the rebellion (Korah, Dathan and Abiram), the secondary mutineers (the 250 followers of Korah, tribal leaders themselves), and a sizeable representation of the nation by plague (14,700). The community was not to take lightly the potential for further and unbridled judgment.

6.6.5 The final situation (17:12-13)

[12] The Israelites said to Moses, "We are perishing; we are lost, all of us are lost! [13] Everyone who approaches the tabernacle of the LORD will die. Are we all to perish?"

This final situation is one of the most remarkable features of the scene and is

artistically ingenious for the continuing dramatic force of the story in the remainder of

Numbers. The combination of three 'prophetic perfects' (הֵ֥ן גָּוַ֖עְנוּ אָבַ֣דְנוּ

כֻּלָּ֥נוּ אָבָֽדְנוּ) [MT Nm 17:27] suggests the community is expressing 'facts which are

undoubtedly imminent, and, therefore, in the imagination of the speaker, already

accomplished' (GKC § 106n). The force of these perfects is the expected certainty of

their own doom in the minds of the people. Readers tend to expect a sense of closure in

the final situation with perhaps a hint of transition into a subsequent scene, perhaps even

creating an illusory conclusion (Bar Efrat 2004:124). Lee (2003:147-148) actually

separates verses 12 & 13 from this unit, such that they are the question that begins the

conversational law section in chapter 18. However the textual connection between the

people's fear of death and God's threat of death to malcontents in verse 10 seem a natural

association. But in this case, the narrator masterfully utilized quotations representative of

the community, projecting an overwhelming expression of distress and uncertainty—

particularly, the concluding question: 'Are we all to perish?' (הַאִ֥ם תַּ֖מְנוּ לִגְוֺֽעַ)

[MT Nm 17:28]. And by leaving the question unanswered, so too, the community's

emotional anguish and fear are left unrelieved within the movement of the story. In

tandem, the reader is left with this unresolved angst about the fate of the nation, thereby

bridging the reader's interest to the next narrative unit and even beyond. The power of

this question at the end of the narrative unit is representative of the author's narrative

acuity, rather than a 'they lived happily ever after' ending; this is a venturesome conclusion that opens, rather than closes the plot.

Considering the broader plotlines of Numbers 16 and 17, the reverse structure of the budding staff incident creates a powerful inversion of flow that makes for an inductive and unfinished ending. While the two conflict stories of Numbers 16 begin with the people grumbling and God responding, here God initiates the test without a new provocation, and upon completing the text leaves the people in a state of distress (Wenham 1981:139). This savvy structural maneuver, though making the exposition dramatically pedestrian, lacking the intensity of conflict, generates an exquisite conclusion that serves both as a transition to what follows but harbors a sense of uncertainty and wonder about the future, particularly for the first-time reader.

Also, there is a unique irony that develops in this narrative related to the reader's level of knowledge, or better acceptance level, compared to that of the hapless community. The first-time reader was made aware of the community's doom in Numbers 14:26-35, and has the impression that the people just did not understand their plight and perhaps hold out sympathy for them and sustain a possibility of hope, not knowing the end of the story. There is a tension created here for the reader, and a potential shift in point of view (Iser 1980:114). This wandering point of view takes place as the novice reader is more likely to have compassion for the hapless community. The experienced reader of the biblical text is fully aware of the peril of the first generation, and probably possesses less sympathy for the nation as they did not submit to God in the wilderness. Regardless, the broad theme of Israel's priesthood, as well as the tension of the

unanswered questions at the end of Numbers 17, lingers into the quasi-legal section that follows in Numbers 18.

Brown (2002:155) suggests that Numbers 18 provides words of comfort to the people as God's response to their fears expressed in Numbers 17:12-13. It is noteworthy however, that comfort did not come to the people within the framework of the narrative, as one might expect, by either direct dialogue from Moses or Aaron, or by a narratorial inclusion. But comfort is at least seemingly provided within the provisions of the law code. The specific answer to the people's fear expressed by the statement: 'Everyone who approaches the tabernacle of the LORD will die', is satisfied in the instructions to the priests: 'You yourselves shall perform the duties of the sanctuary and the duties of the altar, so that wrath may never again come upon the Israelites' (Nm 18:5). In the same way that God sent judgment, plague, and a sign in the test of rods in order to stop their grumbling (Nm 17:10), he also sent consolation in Numbers 18 through affirmation in Aaron's priesthood who were designated to intercede and make offerings for the community.

6.7   Conclusion

In summary, this analysis has demonstrated the ability of the priestly redactors to combine and interlace three powerful plots and sustain the narrative conventions of the text that challenges the heart and mind of the readership. All three stories reveal a lucid dramatic flow of plot, well explicated by the quinary model of plot. At the same time, numerous particular features at the semiotic and semantic level have proved to elicit charged interest in would be readers. The two different types of plot present: resolution

243

and revelatory (See Figure 2) work together to sustain interest and complement both the intense level of action in Numbers 16 and the more revelatory nature of Numbers 17. And perhaps the most powerful feature of the entire section is the unanswered rhetorical questions at the end of Numbers 17 that stirs the imagination of the reader. The priestly school maintained a strong sense of narrative aesthetics while at the same time communicating and redacting traditional materials.

When considering the narrator's aims with regard to the plot, Trible (1994:9) suggests the following three goals of communication, which she utilizes as part of rhetorical analysis: the intellectual goal of teaching, the emotional goal of touching the feelings, and the aesthetic goal of pleasing so as to hold attention. The pedagogical nature of this unit must be noted as two specific commemorative features were instituted that were meant to be lasting lessons for the community: the offender's hammered censers on the altar of burnt offering, and the budded staff of Aaron contained within the ark. Both of these institutions were not necessary to the story but serve, like the literal items among the nation, for the reader as lessons to be appropriated. Considering these three aims of communication, the priestly redactors have proved their remarkable pedagogical and artistic ability in the narrative redacting of Numbers 16 and 17.

7 CONCLUSION

This narrative critical study contributes to the sector of Old Testament scholarship that has taken up a renewed interest in modern literary theory and its methods of research. Whereas historical critical methods have occupied the field over the past century, subscribing to modern 'scientific' assumptions such as positivism and rationalism, the newer literary methods have moved in varying degrees away from these assumptions to engage the more subjective elements of human language and the role of the reader in biblical interpretation. The intense narrative sequence of Numbers 16 and 17 serves as a prolific story in the book of Numbers—highly fruitful for narrative analysis. The bitter acrimony between its protagonists (God, Moses, and Aaron) and antagonists (Korah, his followers, Dathan and Abiram, and the people) results in violent judgments, yet incorporates an instructive denouement. Analysis of this dramatic and action-packed narrative accommodates lively interaction with literary theory.

The hermeneutical footing of this study is founded on Chatman's expanded communication model (author-implied author-text-implied reader-reader) which is derived from Jakobson's communication model (sender-message-receiver). In this study, Chatman's model is refined and nuanced according to current literary trends and the unique proclivities of Hebrew narration. This hermeneutical approach accepts indicators of meaning from each quadrant of the communication model, rather than overtly focusing on one (author, text or reader). The assumption here is that the surface text, as well as the underlying features of the text, is intended to communicate rhetorically, aesthetically, emotionally, and ideologically. While readers derive meaning from texts, these meaning(s) are found in germinate and decisive elements of the structure and linguistics

of the text. This narrative analysis works to balance the matrix of author-text-reader in a

manner that conforms to the reading process for biblical readers who are motivated to

read the Old Testament for varying reasons, including historical, ideological, and ethical.

Chapter one of this study traces the history of Pentateuchal studies, paying

particular attention to the critical approaches of the modern period that have germinated

since the documentary hypothesis. The prestigious work of Julius Wellhausen sought to

uncover the compositional history of the Pentateuch that spawned decades of revising and

recasting the original source critical configurations and assumptions. The source critical

project manifested the complexity of the process that resulted in the final form of the

Pentateuch, and has ultimately established that many authors and redactors over a

protracted period of time contributed to its final composition. While documentarians

explored historical questions concerning the biblical text, many scholars in Old

Testament studies are working to engage modern literary theory and reader-oriented

approaches. This project adopts many modern literary assumptions but works on the

foundation provided by decades of Old Testament critical scholarship.

Chapter two explores the veracity of Korah's rebellion as an actual historical

event; is the story history, folklore, or something in between? To many scholars, the

absence of direct extrabiblical evidence suggests a mythological origin. To date, no

archaeological or historical research has uncovered direct material or textual extra-

biblical evidence to substantiate Israel's history prior to their emergence in Canaan

during the early Iron Age. Nonetheless, numerous circumstantial indicators corroborate

aspects of the biblical narrative that report Israel's presence in Egypt and by default, a

sojourn in the wilderness. While these indicators do not authenticate the biblical

testimony, they do allow for the potential historicity of a migration of Israelites from Egypt to Canaan. Following Dever and others, this study provisionally accepts that a group of Israelites migrated from Egypt to Canaan and that Numbers represents Israel's traditional account of that event. As only circumstantial evidence exists to propose this much, nothing more can be maintained. Should further material or textual evidence be discovered, then this assertion should be revisited. Notwithstanding, a narrative analysis of this traditional Hebrew text is worthy of examination because of the manner in which the story informs and instructs its community and the distinctive contribution it makes to the biblical canon.

Further, the issues surrounding the documentation of biblical historical narrative (historiography) is a complex one. Even though biblical narrative has a historical thrust, there remains a significant ideological force that can be considered apart from its historical accuracy. Additionally, if this rebellion story has a historical foundation, it was surely transmitted by oral tradition until the time of its writing—also making its historical accuracy questionable. Nonetheless, possessing ideological content and having an oral genesis, does not make its elemental features impossible. Source critical input has traditionally suggested that the P source, so prominent in this narrative, gave particular shape to the story and to some degree imports their contemporary concerns into the story. While P is thought to be highly shaped by their own concerns (often considered postexilic) it should also be presumed that the priestly redactors maintained some fidelity to their inherited traditions. The evidence now seems compelling that the P materials have their origins over many centuries, perhaps as early as pre-monarchic Israel, and as

late as the post-exilic fourth century B.C. Undisputed, however, is the definitive shape and message of the final form of this powerful and incisive narrative.

Chapter three begins by considering the organization and structure of the book of Numbers and then proceeds to specifically examine the source critical features of Numbers 16 and 17. Both of these researches highlight Numbers 16 and 17 as a central narrative, in their own way.

The diverse materials and disjointed flow of the book of Numbers has resulted in multiple proposals for ascribing its outline. Even so, the various proposals rather consistently place Numbers 16 and 17 in a featured or significant transitional location. Milgrom and Douglas have highlighted the alternation between law and narrative as prominent features in the flow of Numbers. Of course, Numbers 15 and 18 present as legal sections; though evidencing modest narrative features, they mark the conspicuous boundaries for the narrative contained in Numbers 16 and 17. The alternation pattern (law and narrative), as well as other structures, suggests that the patterning is an intentional and favourable literary feature of the book which advances its readability through the use of cadence.

The symmetrical outline of the book of Numbers, as advocated by Cole's cyclical outline and Douglas' ring pattern, establishes Korah's rebellion narrative as the common center point, even though their configurations are rather diverse. The pattern of these cycles accentuates Korah's rebellion story as the epicenter and focal point of the book, perhaps following the Hebrew preference for center stress exemplified by the common use of symmetrical structures (Avishur 1999:20). Moreover, Numbers 16 and 17 is the most substantive of the wilderness era and is posited as a representative narrative to

exemplify the thirty-nine year period of sojourning—emblematic of the nations' general mood that ranges from contrary to defiant.

Additionally, chapter three demonstrates the prominent crafting of Numbers 16 and 17 as observed in the work of source critics who find this unit to be a composite of at least two narrative stories that were woven together. At this point in the progress of source critical research, an absolute arrangement and dating of the individual sources has not emerged, and most are pessimistic about the possibility of arriving at an absolute consensus. What does seem foundational from documentarians is that multiple authors and redactors were producing, collecting, and editing the Hebrew Bible that is *terminus ante quem* by 300 B.C. In as much as the details of this process remain enigmatic, the resulting product—the Hebrew Bible—possesses remarkable literariness. The observations of source critics often expose the literary techniques and strategies employed by its Hebrew writers, scribes and redactors. Another byproduct of source critical investigation is the identification of fractures, boundaries and compositional strategies (structures and grammar) used by these writers. These structures and strategies inherently contribute to the explicit surface meaning of the writings themselves. In like manner, source critical conclusions corroborate the intentional crafting and redacting of the rebellion narrative—combining two rebellion stories into one—to accomplish a greater dramatic effect upon its readership. In this regard, the narrative of Numbers 16 and 17 has proved fruitful for narrative analysis on several fronts, including detailed consideration of narration, characterization, point of view, and plot structure.

Chapter four analyzes the complex point of view strategies that are evident in the narration of the rebellion story. This analysis draws on two major facets of point of view

theory: (1) focalization, first postulated by Genette, and (2) the tripartite categories of Rimmon-Kenan (perceptual, psychological, and ideological). The narration in Numbers 16 and 17 exhibits point of view strategies that soundly exalt the perspective of Moses (and God) above all the others participant, entirely apart from the content of the story. As Moses is ascribed so many words in the discourse, this allows the reader to establish a higher level of attachment to him as a character and his ideological position. This is in contrast to Korah, who does not speak in solo anywhere in the narrative, canceling out the prospect of the reader forming an ideological bond to his character or complaint. Likewise, in an interesting way, the personal character of Aaron is also minimized as he is also given no words of his own in the whole narrative. Yet his actions in the censor mediation reveal the power of his priestly role. And the people, being nominated in three different ways, perhaps in an ironic manner (variously called, "all Israel", "the congregation of the sons of Israel", or "the sons of Israel"), demonstrate their erratic loyalties and instability. Ultimately, the point of view strategies, apart from the plot and content of the story, uphold the ideological stance of Moses in a way that subtly merges with the action of the story to have the reader adopt the protagonist's outlook.

In chapter five, the narrator's judgments concerning the characters are intimated through the manner in which the narrator releases information to the reader. While only a limited character sketch is possible for any of the characters involved, the narrator uses the characters as a way to shape the reader's attachments. As demonstrated, the God character, Moses, and Aaron, are surreptitiously championed in the narrator's description of and perspective on the events. At the same time, Korah, Dathan and Abiram, and the rest of the detracting community, are cryptically indicted by the narrator's point of

view—substantiating the explicit action of the surface text. The broad assumption is that readers tend to be swayed to conform to the narrator's assessment of the action by covert operations in the story's portrayal. For example, in keeping with most Hebrew narration, the language and description of this terrible plague is notably calm, in comparison to the calamitous nature of the event. This placid narratorial reporting of deadly events serves to constrict the reader's sympathies for the rebels and the hapless Israelite community.

The scarcity of direct and unambiguous statements concerning biblical characters results in a slim number of thoroughly developed psychological caricatures. In Numbers 16 and 17, the author(s) provides virtually no unequivocal, direct statements about the characters of this narrative. Even beyond the scope of Numbers 16 and 17, few candid expressions are made describing even the major characters (God, Moses, or Aaron) in the story. Thus any portrait of the personages involved must be derived from the limited textual indicators, the interpretation of the activities of the characters, and the strategies of the narrator. This study generally adopts Chatman's approach to characters that accepts the engagement of readers who naturally individuate and appraise the actions of characters. While it is acknowledged that literary portrayals are limited in scope, readers will inherently assemble an image of the character, if they have sufficient information to accomplish this.

The assemblage of some character indicators for the major characters proves to be congruous with the nature of the plot within Numbers 16 and 17. Again following Chatman (1978:119) this study accepts that characters (personages) originate in the textual world (words) but at the same time naturally become 'open' constructs in the minds of readers. This reading approach adopts a stance of acceptance, discovery and

cogency rather than distrust and incongruence. Furthermore, the approach of Chatman aims for equity between the author and the reader in the process of interpretation, accepting the interplay of language and reader in the hermeneutical process.

The God character, while possessing some human-like qualities, such as intellect, emotion and will, is portrayed quite divergently, having extraordinary abilities. The main human protagonist, Moses proves to be the exemplary mediator. To the narrator, Moses' words and actions are paragons and there would be no plausible reason not to support his leadership. In keeping with Hebrew narrative, the narrator utilizes understatement and matter-of-fact language to describe the rather sensational events, but employs point of view strategies to great advantage. With implicit but powerful strategies the narrator repels the accusations of the rebels by utilizing Moses' reputation as the favoured protagonist, giving no individuated words to Korah, and yet allowing Dathan and Abiram to voice their own self-incriminating complaints. Aaron continues to stand in his brother's shadow but is upheld as the divinely elected high priest. Though, Aaron's significance as a character is vastly eclipsed by Moses, who is assigned abundantly more dialogue throughout the story. While the leadership of the priesthood is the central and only theme of Numbers 17, Aaron is not even an active participant in the story. The principal antagonist, Korah, is portrayed as the paradigmatic leader of sedition. He is given no words of his own, so as to express his own complaints, yet is soundly denounced by the surface plot and the covert influence of the narrator. The narrator allows Dathan and Abiram to express their outlandish charges against Moses, in a manner that astonishes the reader.

Chapter six analyzes the plot movements of the narrative and considers how the plot is intended to appeal to the reader's sensitivities. Numbers 16 and 17 displays three complete plot movements according to the quinary scheme (exposition, complication, transforming action, denouement, and final situation). The first two plot movements bring resolution to the conflict (Nm 16:1-40 and Nm 16:41-50) while the third is revelatory in nature as Aaron's staff buds, re-affirming God's election of the Aaronide priesthood (Nm 17:1-13). Truly remarkable of the first plot movement is the sagacious interlacing of two similar rebellion stories by the priestly redactors. While some disagreement remains over the exact lines of demarcation, it is widely presumed that two separate rebellion stories were combined together (Dathan and Abiram JE, with the Korah P). The final product is a magnificent plot structure that elevates the dramatic effect of the plot upon the reader. The radical judgments in the storyline (surface text), plus the astute employment of a dual conflict, result in a powerfully affective narrative. As the plot is an emotive aspect of narration, it is the reader's sensitivities that are engaged by the text. But rather than employing a reader-response hermeneutic that transfers meaning to the reader, adopting the notion of reader sensitivity allows for the inclusion of the reader in the interpretive equation without ignoring the author or the text.

In sum, Numbers 16 constitutes an outstanding example of a scribal operation of interlacing two rebellion stories into one with a potent aesthetic advantage for the readership. Though each story (JE & P) brings its own level of conflict, by combining the two, the redactors created a synergy that sustains and increases the sense of animosity between the leaders and the rebels in the story. Thus, the final product, in addition to raising the intensity from scene to scene, allows for a greater height at the initial climax

253

and then provides for a more placid and sublime denouement with Aaron 'standing in the gap'. Numbers 17 fittingly acts as a divine ratification of Aaron's priesthood for the community. This examination of Korah's rebellion has underscored the literary and narrative elements of the story that were meant to perpetuate the force and message of Numbers 16 and 17 to subsequent generations in the Israelite community. This study exemplifies the benefits of narrative critical examination that exposes the discourse strategies, the rich and subtle operations of the narration, and intended impact of the story upon its readership.

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