Scholars have long wondered at the intrusive presence of Genesis 38 currently situated right in the middle of the Joseph story. Too many commentators to cite here have concluded that the incapsulated story about Tamar and Judah has absolutely nothing to do with the surrounding narrative. Its presence is considered so invasive that it is often excluded from the discussion of the Joseph story altogether, and dealt with separately in complete isolation from its present context. Only recently have scholars admitted that, though unoriginal, the narrative has in fact been masterfully woven into the Joseph narrative. In addition to the puzzling location of Genesis 38, the narratival purpose of the


story also proves difficult to determine. Whether it primarily functions as tribal history, family story, or royal genealogy, the narrative is undeniably related to David in some way simply because it concludes with the birth of his ancestor.\(^3\) This paper attempts to demonstrate that the Davidic backdrop to Genesis 38 that is often considered the purpose of the isolated narrative is also the key to understanding its enigmatic placement within the Joseph story.

**David and Judah**

That David would be somehow related to the story of his ancestor, Judah, in Genesis 38 is a most natural assumption. Many scholars even consider the birth of Perez to be the key to understanding the story’s purpose.\(^4\) But relatively recently, scholars have noticed dimensions of the story beyond this conspicuous connection to David that reveal a relationship between Genesis 38 and the Davidic family stories as told in Samuel and the beginning of Kings. In addition to the story’s obvious interest in Judahite genealogy, the theme of sexual deception, the similarity between family names, and other narrative correlations have led some scholars to believe that Genesis 38 is more about David’s family than it is about Judah’s.

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4. For example, Donald B. Redford hypothesizes that the story of Tamar and Judah was originally, along with Ruth, a part of a cycle that was concerned with David’s origins, *A Study of the Biblical Story of Joseph: (Genesis 37-50)* (VTSup 20; Leiden: Brill, 1970), 16-17.
Though coming to very different conclusions, Gary A. Rendsburg and Craig Y. S. Ho have made observations that reveal interdependency between Genesis 38 and the so-called succession narrative (2 Samuel 13 - 1 Kings 2). Rendsburg demonstrates that the names in Genesis 38 are strikingly similar to the names of David’s family and argues that the story was written (or adapted) “to poke fun at the royal family.” Building upon Rendsburg’s work, Ho looks more at narratival themes than simple character equations and connects Genesis 38 to various points throughout the entire succession narrative, determining that the story was invented for the sole purpose of defending David’s Judahite pedigree. Though both of their studies have demonstrated that there is in fact a relationship between Genesis 38 and the David stories, they do not help us answer the question concerning the strange placement of the narrative. In fact, the connection with David seems to obscure the answer all the more. We are left wondering why a story that points to the great king from the tribe of Judah (whether by means of foreshadow or parody) is wedged into the middle of a narrative concerned with the great patriarch of the northern tribes of Ephraim and Mannaseh. In order to come closer to answering that question, we must further explore the relationship between David and Genesis as a whole, continuing to build upon work done by Ho and Rendsburg that has acknowledged the close ties between the Tamar-Judah episode and the David stories.

and David, but in such a way that does not isolate it from the narrative immediately surrounding it.

That there is a relationship between the Pentateuch and the monarchy is not a novel idea. Much has been written about the literary connections between Genesis and Samuel. Walter Brueggemann and Joseph Blenkinsopp, for example, have made similar observations while exploring the influence of the David narratives on the very first chapters of Genesis.\(^8\) It is in this “larger network of relationships” that Graeme Auld has suggested Genesis 38 must be read.\(^9\) Because both Genesis and Samuel are large bodies of work each having its own complex history of composition, no doubt the relationship between the two is just as polyvalent. What we will do here, is draw out and examine one of what must be many facets of this literary relationship in order to see how the stories of Samuel inform our understanding of the placement of the episode between Judah and Tamar. By beginning with the Tamar-Judah episode as the primary point of contact with the succession narrative, and then extending outward to include Genesis 37 and 39, we will see that the story’s connection to David does not further alienate it from the Joseph narrative but actually serves to integrate it into its seemingly odd context.

**Tamar and Tamar**

Aside from the episode’s interest in David’s Judahite pedigree, the clearest connections between Genesis 38 and the succession narrative can be found in its obvious counterpart, the rape of Tamar and the murder of her assaulter in 2 Samuel 13. If we do not

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require Genesis 38 to correspond with the entire Davidic familial drama, as Ho does, and allow the unmissable correlation, the two women named Tamar, to be our starting point, then we see that the narrative of Tamar and Amnon is an unsettling inversion of the narrative of Tamar and Judah. The two stories about a woman named Tamar intersect narratively at four points. Beginning with Genesis 38, the narrative progression is as follows: 1) The men who have sex with Tamar are put to death; 2) Tamar is denied her only path to legitimate marriage; 3) she is consigned to live as a widow in her father's house; and 4) Tamar deceives and seduces her father-in-law. The narrative of 2 Samuel 13 progresses as follows: 1) Tamar is deceived and raped by her half-brother; 2) she is denied her only path to legitimate marriage, and; 3) Tamar is consigned to live as a desolate woman in the house of her brother; and 4) the man who had sex with Tamar is put to death.

The second and third points in each narrative correspond neatly to one another. By being the widow of two brothers and supposedly being promised to the third, when Tamar is denied Shelah, she is denied her only legitimate path to marriage and children. Having been sent away before the marriage has taken place, Tamar is presumably unable to remarry and must remain in her father's house. In 2 Samuel 13, though disturbing to the modern reader, Tamar pleads with her rapist not to send her away because Amnon is now the only man she can marry. Though the legality of incest is a question in the case of Amnon and Tamar, Deuteronomic law required the rapist to marry his victim (22:28-29). When Amnon

10. Ho argues that the plots mirror each other in that a sex scandal leads to the death of three sons (Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah) in one story and the death of two almost three sons leads to a sex scandal in the other story. Though the rape of Tamar is certainly the beginning of the revolt of Absalom, it seems to be pushing the mirrored plot unnecessarily to try to somehow fit the death of Absalom and Adonijah into the scope of Genesis 38.
casts her out, Tamar despairs exclaiming that this last evil is even greater than the first. Each Tamar is similarly turned out and forced to retreat as an unmarried but ineligible woman to the house of a male relative, the father in the one case and the brother in the other.

As for points one and four in the narratives, they are not only in reverse order, but the roles of the sexual deception are also reversed. In Genesis 38, the deaths of the men who have sex with Tamar ultimately lead to deceit and seduction, but in 2 Samuel 13 deceit and rape ultimately lead to the death of the rapist. While one Tamar is praised for having rightfully secured the family line by deceiving and seducing her father-in-law, the other is told to hold her peace after being deceived and raped by her half-brother. This inversion is further enhanced by the removal of a garment that signifies a certain status. In order to seduce her father-in-law, Tamar removes her widow’s garb; after Tamar is raped, she tears her long robe that signified she was a virgin daughter of the king. It is also worth noting that the fourth point of narrative overlap in each story occurs at the time of sheep shearing. In Genesis 38 Judah sets out for Timnah to shear his sheep, and Tamar meets him on the road. In 2 Samuel 13 Amnon attends a sheep shearing festival at Absalom’s request where he is attacked and killed.¹¹

When we juxtapose Genesis 38 with 2 Samuel 13, the narratives reveal an unsettling correspondence that, at first glance, does not seem to assist in any sort of Davidic apology, if that is in fact what the succession narrative was intended to be.¹² But before we can begin

¹¹ Blenkinsopp observes that the vindication of each woman takes place at a sheep shearing festival, “Theme and Motif,” 53.
¹² Since L. Rost originally labeled the so-called “succession narrative” as court apology, the genre and purpose of the David stories have been the subject of debate, as can be seen in
to speculate about the purpose of these allusions, we must look at the relationship between
2 Samuel 13 and the narrative preceding and following Genesis 38.

**Tamar and Joseph**

Having examined the two Tamar stories side by side, we now expand our search for intertextuality to include the narratives immediately surrounding Genesis 38. What we will

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13 When I use the term “intertextuality,” I do not evoke it in the sense of Julia Kristeva’s original appellation, but use it as a broad term to include intended literary relationships between two or more texts, be they specific allusions or broader similarities. The study of biblical intertextuality has been fraught with methodological questions. There has been quite a lively discussion about what “intertextuality” is and what it is not, the different types

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find is that the familial drama and Joseph’s encounter with Potiphar’s wife also correlate narratively and, in several cases, verbally to 2 Samuel 13.

The Joseph drama begins in Genesis 37 and then continues in Genesis 39. Though Genesis 38 informs the surrounding narrative and shares in its thematic threads, as Levenson and Alter have demonstrated,¹⁴ the encounter between Judah and Tamar does not play a role in the basic plot development of the Joseph story. Therefore, the narrative of the Joseph story from 37 to 39 (skipping over 38) progresses from a case of near-fratricide to a false accusation of sexual assault. Like Genesis 38, the narrative progression from chapter 37 to 39 is the reverse of the narrative shape of 2 Samuel 13 that we noted above, in which a case of sexual assault leads to fratricide. Because the points of contact between the narratives are so many, we will look at them in the order of the narrative found in 2 Samuel 13. The numbered list is simply an attempt at organization. In some cases, one numbered observation will include more than one point of contact between the texts.

(1) *Tamar and Joseph are beautiful* (2 Sam 13:1; Gen 39:6b-7). Each narrative begins with the transitional marginal clause typical of the larger body of work in which it is situated. The introductory phrase יִהְיוּ אֱלֹהִים כִּי occurs eight times in the Deuteronomistic History (Judg 16:4; 1 Sam 24:6; 2 Sam 2:1; 8:1; 10:1; 13:1; 21:18; 2 Kings 6:24) while the phrase יִהְיוּ אלהים הדברים האלה occurs six times in Genesis (15:1; 22:1, 20; 39:7; 40:1; 48:1).

Both marginal clauses connect the proceeding narrative to what has come before it, which in each case is sexual scandal (Tamar and Judah in Genesis 38 and Bathsheba and David in 2 Samuel 12). In these very similar introductions we are informed that the primary characters are attractive. Tamar is יפה תואר ויפה מראהו אחות יפה and Joseph is אוחה פה. After the introductory marginal clause, each narrative proper (signaled by the the use of a sequential form) begins with the beautiful person being noticed. Each has caught the eye of an individual who is an inappropriate admirer due to the particular relationship between the relevant characters. We learn in a disconcerting, roundabout fashion, that Tamar and Amnon are in fact siblings, and in a more straightforward manner, that Joseph’s admirer is his master’s wife.

(2) Tamar and Joseph are pined for day after day (2 Sam 13:4; 39:10). Amnon’s “wise” friend, Jonadab, notices that Amnon looks miserable morning after morning (בעבר), and learns that it is because he is in love with Tamar. Potiphar’s wife speaks to Joseph day after day (יום יום) in hopes that he will succumb to her solicitations.

(3) Tamar and Joseph are sent by their fathers into a trap laid by their brother(s) (2 Sam 13:7; Gen 37:13). When David visits his supposedly ill son, Amnon asks him to send Tamar to nurse him back to health by preparing food in his sight. David grants Amnon’s wish and sends Tamar to his bedside, completely ignorant that he is sending his daughter into a violent trap (ישלחו הודו אלתמר המיטה להאמר לך בית אמהו אחיו). Jacob sends Joseph to check on his brothers, not knowing that they will plot murder when they see him
(4) **Tamar and Joseph are going about their assigned tasks when each is caught alone with the “admirer”** (2 Sam 13:9; Gen 39:11). Tamar is in Amnon’s bedroom simply because she is obeying her father’s orders to nurse her sick brother. Once she prepares his food, Amnon commands everyone to leave them and she is left alone with him. Similarly, the text of Genesis 39 explicitly states that Joseph enters the house in order to do his work. He is simply going about his business when he finds the house mysteriously empty except for Potiphar’s wife, who has presumably arranged for the privacy. Each story makes it very clear that the protagonist is completely innocent and has not instigated or provoked the crime committed against them.

(5) **Amnon and Potiphar’s wife use the same imperative in an attempt to seduce** (2 Sam 13:11; Gen 39:7, 12). When Tamar is left alone with her brother he takes hold of her, and says, “Lie with me,” before overpowering her (וַיָּזָהוּ בְּאֵין לָהּ בָּאוּרֵי עָמָיו). Potiphar’s wife uses the imperative on two occasions, and on the second takes hold of Joseph by his garment (וַתַּחֲפָשָה בְּבִינָיו לַאֲמָר שְׁבֹבִי עָמָיו).
(6) *Tamar and Joseph refuse and respond with rhetorical questions* (2 Sam 13:13; Gen 39:9). Tamar exclaims that such behavior is not tolerated in Israel, and Joseph reminds Potiphar’s wife that he is her husband’s servant. Each responds to the demand with a rhetorical question: “How could I do this great evil?” (וַאֲפִלוּ אֶעְפֹּר הָרוּחַ הַנְּבֶלֶת הָאָחָה;), “Where could I go with my shame?” (וַאֲפִילּוּ אֶעְפֹּר אֵלֶּיה הַחֲרֶצֶת). At this point in the narrative, leading up to the climax, we find two instances where Tamar and Joseph no longer correspond to one another, but Tamar to Potiphar’s wife and Joseph to Amnon:

(7) *Potiphar’s wife is withheld from Joseph, but Tamar would not be withheld from Amnon* (2 Sam 13:13; Gen 39:8-9). Joseph reminds Potiphar’s wife that she is the only thing his master has withheld from him whereas Tamar pleads with Amnon to speak with their father because the king would not withhold her from Amnon. Tamar’s statement has confused commentators in light of incest being forbidden in Deuteronomic and Priestly law (Deut 27:22; Lev 18:9, 11; 20:17). Whether Tamar’s proposal is a real legal possibility or simply a desperate attempt to avoid the assault, the narrator presents the situation as if Amnon only had to ask permission in order to avoid any violence. This narrative inversion makes the scene in 2 Samuel 13 more dreadful and Amnon more wicked. Whereas both Potiphar’s wife and Amnon are attracted to someone off-limits, Amnon has a non-violent, presumably legal path of satisfying his base desires that he completely disregards.

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17. Tamar’s language is also similar to that used in Judges 19:23, 24; 20:6 and the rape of Dinah in Genesis 34, which we will look at briefly below.
(8) Amnon and Joseph refuse to listen to the request made by each woman (2 Sam 13:14, 16; Gen 39:10). Tamar righteously pleads to Amnon not to violate her, and then once he has done the terrible deed, that he would not cast her out. Potiphar’s wife wickedly asks Joseph to lie with her. In each case, the man refuses to listen, one in an upright manner (לֹּא אבָּה וּלֹּא אבָּה וּלֹּא אבָּה לִשְׁמֵע בַּקֹּלָה) and the other in a most base manner (וּלֹּאָה וּלֹּאָה וּלֹּאָה וּלֹּאָה לִשְׁמֵע לֵיה). Each woman, with her request denied, receives what the other woman was seeking. Potiphar’s wife is left without a sexual encounter, while Tamar has one forced upon her. While Joseph is able to shake loose from the woman’s grasp and flee, Tamar is overpowered and raped.

(9) After the incident, the assaulter summons servants in order to seal the fate of the victim (2 Sam 13:17; Gen 39:14). Once Potiphar’s wife realizes that Joseph has escaped outside (הוֹרֵצָה is repeated four times: Gen 39:12, 13, 15, 18), she calls to the servants who were mysteriously absent (ויִקְרָא אֵלֵאָה בִּיהַה) and falsely accuses Joseph of sexual harassment. As soon as Amnon if finished with Tamar, we are told that he hates her more than he ever loved her. He therefore calls to his servant whom he had previously told to leave them (וֹיקָרָא אֵלֵאָה מִשְרָה) in order to cast Tamar outside to her ruin (הוֹרֵצָה is used once in 2 Sam 13:17 and בָּלָה once in verse 18).

(10) Tamar and Joseph have decorative tunics (2 Sam 13:18-19; Gen 37:3). After Tamar has been raped, and as she is being sent away, the narrative describes to us the special garment that she has been wearing, the difficult to translate תַּנְתָּכָּה. We are told that Tamar wears this decorative tunic as a sign that she is the virgin daughter of the
Joseph, of course, is the only other individual in the Hebrew Bible to also wear a decorative tunic by his father as a sign of his particular status, the most beloved son. At the mention of the decorative tunic, 2 Samuel 13 begins to reveal connections to Genesis 37 in addition to Genesis 39. The mention of Tamar’s tunic also connects the narrative to a thematic thread that runs through Genesis 37, 38, and 39, that is, the role the protagonist’s garment plays in deception.\textsuperscript{18} Joseph’s brothers dip his robe in blood and let their father believe that he has been torn to pieces. Tamar disguises herself with a veil so as to seduce her father-in-law. Potiphar’s wife points to Joseph’s robe in her hands so as to incriminate him. But while Joseph’s garment in Genesis 37 and 39 is a sign of an incident that has been feigned, here in 2 Samuel 13 the incident signified by Tamar’s torn garment is sadly true.

(11) \textit{Both are wrongfully stripped of their status and sent away} (2 Sam 13:20; Gen 39:20). Tamar is consigned to live a desolate life in the house of her brother, and Joseph is sent to prison. Though each is the wronged party, one raped the other falsely accused, it is the victims of the sexual harassment that are the ones to bear the punishment.

(12) \textit{David and Potiphar hear and become angry} (2 Sam 13:21; Gen 39:19). When the patriarch of each household hears of the sexual assault (only one of course hears a true story), each becomes greatly angered (ויהי טעם אנון אתחדתיי אש稠 ושר דבריה אלי לאמור חדנירם הלאה עשה לי עבדך ויהו אפר). We have already seen that Potiphar’s response is to send whom he perceives to be the perpetrator to prison. In contrast, David, though angry, does nothing about the

\textsuperscript{18} See Levenson, \textit{Death and Resurrection}, 158-60.
crime. The Septuagint and 4QSam go on to inform us that David does nothing because Amnon is his beloved firstborn son, which again reminds us of Joseph’s status as the beloved son (Gen 37:3).\(^{19}\)

(13) **Fraternal hatred leads to speechlessness** (2 Sam 13:22; Gen 37:4). Because of sheer hatred, Absalom will not speak to his brother at all (יֵשֶׁנֶּהוּ לָא יְהוֹ אָלוֹ בָּאוּרָה לְשׁוֹנָם), just as Joseph’s brothers are incapable of speaking peaceably to him due to their hatred (ואנשיו יאדו ולא יכלו דבר ולשון). Jealousy aroused by the father’s favoritism is clearly the reason for the brothers’ abhorrence in Genesis 37 and could also be lurking behind Absalom’s hatred. The information that the narrator provides in 2 Sam 13:21, that David did nothing to Amnon because “he loved him and because he was his firstborn,” is reminiscent of the information provided in Gen 37:3, that “Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his sons, because he was the son of his old age.” Because of this fatherly indulgence, Amnon goes unpunished, Joseph is spoiled, and their brothers plot murder.

(14) **Tamar and Joseph are vindicated two years later** (2 Sam 13:23; Gen 41:1). The construction שָנִים יָשָׁנֶה, often translated “two full years,” only occurs five times in the Hebrew Bible: once in each of our narratives of interest, once only a chapter later (in 2 Sam 14:28 we learn that Absalom waits two whole years before he is allowed to see the king), and twice in Jeremiah (Jer 28:3; 28:11). The expression seems to highlight the particular

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19. Kyle McCarter prefers this reading to the MT, *II Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes, and Commentary* (AB 9; Garden City: Doubleday, 1984), 319-20. Even if it were not original, this reading could indicate a perceived relationship between the motifs of the beloved son in both 2 Samuel 13 and Genesis 37.
length of time that has passed. After Joseph is sent to prison and has correctly interpreted
the dreams of the cupbearer and the baker, he waits two whole years before he is freed in
order to interpret Pharaoh’s dream (יהיו צוקים ימי ופועה חלמ in Gen 41:1). Absalom
waits patiently before executing his plan to kill the king’s firstborn son at a sheep shearing
festival (יהיו לשתים ימי ויהי גוים לאבשלום in 2 Sam 13:23), so two years pass before
Tamar is avenged.

(15) *The fathers unknowingly send their sons to their doom* (2 Sam 13:27; Gen
37:13-14). At this stage in the narrative, Amnon, the beloved firstborn, now corresponds
with Joseph, the beloved son of his father’s old age. After being pressed by Absalom, David
finally agrees to send Amnon to the sheep shearing festival along with the rest of his sons
(ויהיו לשתים ימי ויהיו גוים לאבשלום). Jacob sends Joseph to check on his brothers out in the fields (לבח
והשל 参数 אדאיו). Both fathers send their beloved sons on a journey to a remote location far
from home (where their brothers are busy with the flock, be it pasturing or shearing) from
which they will never return.²⁰

(16) *The brothers plot murder* (2 Sam 13:28; Gen 37:18). In each narrative we hear
the behind-the-scene deliberations that take place before the hated brother arrives. Absalom
instructs his servant to strike and kill Amnon at the right moment, and Joseph’s brothers
plot to kill him when they see him at a distance.

²⁰ In his study of the *mashal* told by the woman of Tekoa, Larry L. Lyke traces the motif of
danger in the field that is significant in both Genesis and Samuel, *King David with the Wise
Woman of Tekoa: The Resonance of Tradition in Parabolic Narrative.* (JSOTSup 155;
The fathers hear and mourn (2 Sam 13:31, 36-37; Gen 37:34-35). Each father is devastated when he hears the news that his beloved son has been slain. He tears his clothes and mourns in a scene of terrible grief surrounded by his surviving children. In 2 Sam 13:37, the reading יימים רבין is found in several manuscripts (MT MSS, OL, Syr) in place of כליהים (MT). This variant would make each narrative end in an identical statement describing the father’s grief, which only occurs in these two instances: והאמרו עלבנו ימים רבין.

Having progressed through the narrative of 2 Samuel 13 noting the correlations to the Joseph story of Genesis 37 and 39, we can acknowledge that some of the points of correspondence might appear to be the result of plot similarity and not intentional intertextuality. Isn’t it a necessity of most stories about rape or sexual harassment that the two individuals be caught alone? Wouldn’t any father grieve? But the points where the stories converge not only narratively but also in specific vocabulary invite us to read the stories in light of each other and to notice the similar contours of the narratival shape even where we don’t find identical wording. That the similar stories are punctuated by verbal correspondences reveals the allusions to be intentional, thus warranting our recognition of even the looser narratival connections.

21. Even if this reading is not the original, it could reveal a scribal effort to bring the two narratives together more closely. (See note 17 above.) This is perhaps similar to the odd use of פָּרַפ in 2 Sam 13:25, 27. The basic meaning of the verb, “to break out,” is very out of place in Absalom’s request to David. Concluding that it makes no sense here, many commentators dismiss it as unoriginal. But either way, be פָּרַפ original or slightly later, it is possible that it is there to remind the reader of the etymology of Perez.
Now that we have seen that the two stories have in fact been brought into dialogue with one another, what is the purpose of this literary relationship? This is of course a complicated question, and one that we will only tentatively and briefly explore here before returning to and concluding with the issue of the placement of Genesis 38. Reading each text in light of the other, we can explore the impact this intertextuality has on the reading of the two narratives in order to come to a tentative conclusion about what the author of the intertextuality intended.

**David and Jacob**

No matter which text is alluding to which or when either was written, the effect of the intertextuality works in both directions. Once the texts have been brought into dialogue, each is read in light of the other. Genesis 37-39 now foreshadows and anticipates 2 Samuel 13, while 2 Samuel 13 now looks back on David’s ancestors and Tamar’s namesake.22 As we saw above, the relationship between the two Tamars is primarily an uncomfortable reversal, one that makes the story of 2 Samuel 13 all the more terrible by the comparison. In one story, we watch Tamar transition from being the victim to being vindicated and even praised for her righteousness. The desolate woman becomes the mother of kings. In the other, we watch the beautiful virgin princess become the oppressed victim told to keep quiet. The daughter of the king becomes a desolate woman.

Similarly, the points of contact between 2 Samuel 13 and the Joseph story immediately surrounding Genesis 38 serve to make the two narratives mirror each other. By

22. Even if David’s daughter is the first to bear the name historically and the first Tamar to appear in writing, Judah’s daughter-in-law bears the name first literally, so to speak, once both narratives are in existence and in relationship with one another.
tracing the progression of 2 Samuel 13 from sexual assault to fratricide we saw that the connections are first predominately with Genesis 39 and then shift to Genesis 37. One story begins where the other ends. The more striking inversion is that the deeds only attempted in Genesis 37 and 39, fratricide and illicit sex, are actually accomplished in 2 Samuel 13, but in reverse order. Joseph manages to escape both scenarios, while Tamar and Amnon become real victims. The rape of Tamar and the murder of Amnon then seem to be portrayed as a dark unraveling of the stories of Genesis 37-39.

But before we determine what is the intended function of such a correlation, we must look at the patriarchs of the stories. Up until this point, we have been most occupied, and naturally so, with the characters who are involved in the action of the stories, but the character in the background of 2 Samuel 13 who is of the most interest in the larger scheme of things is, of course, David. This father who unknowingly sends his beloved son to be killed by his hateful brother reminds us of Jacob. We noted above (points 4 and 15) that Jacob’s sending of Joseph to his brothers corresponds with David’s sending of both Tamar to Amnon’s bed and Amnon to Absalom’s sheep shearing festival. David sends each of them into a violent trap at the request of his son, Amnon in one case and Absalom in the other. In both instances, David is portrayed as acting, though perhaps foolishly, in the interest of his family. He is simply granting the seemingly harmless requests of his sons to be in the company of a particular sibling. Similarly, Jacob sends Joseph not at the brothers’ request, but for their sake. Their father is concerned for them as they tend the sheep far from home, and so he sends Joseph to learn how they are faring in the field. Both fathers are portrayed as loving fathers, even too loving, but not the individuals directly responsible for the crime.
David should have punished his son instead of being made passive by his fatherly love, and perhaps Jacob should not have let his fatherly love carry him away to excessive favoritism. One could even argue that each should have suspected some jealousy and anger on the part of his other children and not have sent his beloved son into their murderous hands. But David is no more guilty than the great patriarch himself. David might not be the model parent, but neither was Jacob, and he certainly is not the villain.

At this stage, it is helpful to look beyond the self-imposed boundaries of our earlier discussion and include the rape of Dinah (Genesis 34) because it also correlates David’s behavior in 2 Samuel 13 with the patriarch Jacob. Similarities between 2 Samuel 13 and Genesis 34 have been noticed by others. Auld has noted the use of verbs ענה and שבכ in both narratives. Tamar’s exclamation that such a foolish thing is not done in Israel (יהא לא יעשה בחרואל אלא תעשה את הנבלה הזאת in 2 Sam 13:12) is very similar to the indignation expressed by Dinah’s brothers (יחא לא יעשה בן־לארשיב ולא יעשה ירחיו שמל). Another verbal correspondence worth noting is the relatively infrequent verb hodish, often translated “to hold one’s peace.” Jacob keeps silent (Gen 34:5), and Amnon instructs Tamar to be silent (2 Sam 13:20) after the rape. Blenkinsopp has observed throughout Genesis and Samuel the pattern of sexual sin that leads to death, a pattern into which every narrative that we have discussed so far fits in some way. Genesis 34 is no exception with the rape of Dinah leading to the

24. This expression of indignation and disgust is also found in Judg 19:23-25.
slaughtering of Shechem, his father, and all the men of their town.\textsuperscript{25} For our purposes, it is important to note that David corresponds to Jacob when Genesis 34 is read in light of 2 Samuel 13. Jacob’s response to the rape of Dinah is similar to David’s response to the rape of Tamar. Both hear of the dreadful deed, but do nothing, unintentionally leaving revenge to the women’s full brothers. Though the inaction of Jacob and David potentially plays a role in the brothers’ rage that leads to the slaughtering of the offenders, the fathers themselves had no part in the evil. If they are at fault at all in the bloody aftermath of their daughters’ rape, it is for being too mild.\textsuperscript{26}

While the juxtaposition of 2 Samuel 13 and Genesis 37-39 does not shine favorably on David’s family, the comparison between David and Jacob reveals the two patriarchs to be quite similar. Their faults are favoritism and passiveness, nothing to be compared with the evil plotted and executed by their children. The resemblance then seems to work in David’s favor, not as an enthusiastic approval but a sober evaluation that nonetheless places him among the ranks of the patriarchs. Kyle McCarter identifies this sort of tension as the “very essence” of apologetic writing. When writing in someone’s defense, the author “presents unfavorable circumstances forthrightly in order to cast a favorable light on them by a variety of literary means.”\textsuperscript{27} The allusions to the Joseph story that put David in the league of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{25} Blenkinsopp, “Theme and Motif,” 44-57.
\item \textsuperscript{26} Others have noticed the resemblance between David and Jacob elsewhere. See Greenstein’s case study on the relationship between Genesis 29 (the marriage of Jacob to Laban’s two daughters) and 1 Samuel 18-19 (the marriage of David to Saul’s two daughters). Greenstein, "The Formation of the Biblical Narrative Corpus," 173-5.
\item \textsuperscript{27} McCarter, "Plots, True or False: The Succession Narrative As Court Apologetic," 360 n. 12.
\end{itemize}
the patriarchs could be precisely one of those literary means by which the narrative portrays
David in a modestly positive light.  

With this correlation of the two fathers in the narratives, it is also possible that the
theology of the Joseph story is intended to be applied to the David story. The interaction
between divine providence and human behavior is clearly at the center of the Joseph story.
That God accomplishes good despite the evil planned by individuals is the theological
thrust of the story, which we see at every stage. In the portion of the Joseph story that this
paper has examined, the plotted murder and the attempted seduction serve to position
Joseph to save his family from starvation so that the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and
Jacob might be fulfilled. Even in the case of Tamar and Judah, the wickedness of Judah’s
sons and Judah himself leads to the birth of Perez, the ancestor of the Davidic dynasty. If we
are intended to see David’s family troubles in light of Judah’s family troubles, then the effect
is one of subtle hope. The evil intended by Jacob’s children was overcome by God’s ultimate
purpose to bless Jacob. Similarly, the evil intended by David’s children, will be overcome by
God’s ultimate purpose to bless the house of David and establish his son on the throne.

Now that we have seen that the interdependency between Genesis 37-39 and 2
Samuel 13 sheds a sympathetic, even hopeful, light on the painful events of 2 Samuel 13, we
can turn the table and propose how this literary relationship effects our reading of Genesis
37 and 39 and informs our understanding of the placement of Genesis 38.

28. The similarities between David and Jacob that this paper explores do not necessitate an
early Solomonic date, but do seem to assist in an apology of sorts.
David and Joseph

While the relationship between David and what is often identified as some sort of “Judah expansion” to the Joseph story is an obvious one, the relationship between David and the rest of the story, often identified as a northern original, is typically overlooked by scholars. The literary relationship explored in this paper challenges the assumption that the north-south tensions are the solution to the compositional dilemmas that the Joseph story presents. Scholarly fixation on such tensions could even lead us to misunderstand the Joseph story altogether. The fact that David’s family stories are strikingly reminiscent not only of the Judah material of Genesis 38 but also the Joseph story surrounding it must make us reconsider Judah’s role in the Joseph story and the assumed secondary nature of the Judah material. David is not injected into the Joseph story in such a way that trumps the north or disenfranchises Ephraim of his birthright. Rather the stage is set with multiple characters, each with a role to play, but who point us forward to David in some way. The scope is pan-Israel, yet with a focus on David.

30. In an interesting article, Sara Japhet argues that David is actually from an Ephraimite clan within the tribe of Judah. If one were to assume her hypothesis, the elevation of both Ephraim and Judah would point positively to David. Sara Japhet, “Was David a Judahite or an Ephraimite? Light from the Genealogies,” in Let Us Go Up to Zion: Essays in Honor of H. G. M. Williamson on the Occassion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday (ed. Ian Provan and Mark J. Boda; VTSup 153; Boston: Brill, 2012) 297-306.
The intertextuality explored in this paper then demystifies the odd placement of Genesis 38 within the Joseph story. In light of the episode’s inverted relationship to 2 Samuel 13, the placement of Genesis 38 becomes most apt when we realize that its immediately surrounding narrative is also a reverse of sorts of 2 Samuel 13. It is then most likely that the story of Judah and Tamar came to be situated in its current placement at the same time the larger narratives about Joseph and David were being made to resemble each other.31 The puzzling location of the seemingly intrusive narrative then seems to be explained by David, the least likely character if one assumes the Joseph story to have a northern agenda. Therefore, the Joseph story cannot simply be described as a northern one punctuated by encapsulated pro-Judah material, but rather one that has been interwoven with the family stories of the most famous Judahite himself.

31. Though sure footing is never to be found in the quagmire of dating biblical texts, this literary relationship would make sense in the context of the southern appropriation of northern traditions that was likely to have occurred after the fall of the northern kingdom but before the Babylonian exile.