

An Exegetical Reading of the Abraham Narrative in Genesis

Semantic, Textuality and Theology

by

KYU SIK HONG

A Thesis

Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in the Faculty of Theology

University of Pretoria

Promoter: Prof. Jurie le Roux

August 2007

DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation/thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Summary

- * Title: AN EXEGETICAL READING OF THE ABRAHAM NARRATIVE IN GENESIS: SEMANTIC, TEXTUALITY AND THEOLOGY
- * Supervisor: Prof. Jurie le Roux
- * Degree: Doctor of Philosophy (2007)
- * Presenter: Kyu Sik Hong
- * Department: Department of Old Testament
- * University: The Faculty of Theology of the University of Pretoria

This thesis is basically an exegetical work investigating the Abraham narrative (Gen 11:27-25:11) in Genesis in a sense of a text-centered approach, which aims to the *Sitz im Text* not to reconstruct the early *Sitz im Leben* of the narrative. In other words, this study seeks primarily to interpret the final form of the narrative as the locus of revelation. Taking the adages ‘no text is an island,’ ‘let the text speak for itself’ as its point of departure, this study focuses on the question how the individual episodes in the Abraham narrative are played by texts in Genesis and in the larger literary units in the Pentateuch. In this vein, the work examines the narrative through careful attention to literary and rhetorical features such as narrative structure, recurring themes and motifs, allusion (or foreshadowing), wordplays, points of view, plot, and characterization by attempting to analyze and describe its structure and the semantics of the arrangement of source material in the pericope of the narrative. For it is believed that the literary tools used by the author (or the final composer) to establish continuity and link various constituent parts together in a unified literary composition.

Seen within such a context, two methodological approaches in this study will be offered promise for discovering possible the narrative function of the Abraham cycle: intertextuality and the composition criticism. The former provides the compositional

tactics mapped out by the author (or the final composer) for the recognition of narrative literary context of the Abraham narrative within the macro-structure and the micro-structure of the Pentateuch. While, the latter asks the right questions to discover textual correlations between the narrative and the rest of texts in Genesis and in the Pentateuch. As a result, this approach to the narrative reveals a distinct compositional strategy, which is to convey the author's (or the final composer's) theological considerations clearly and persuasively.

Methodological peculiarities for reading the Abraham narrative are considered in chapter 1. Chapter 2 is to examine in detail of the inner literary arrangement of the Abraham narrative in the narrative frame of Genesis and the Pentateuch. It is followed by a discussion of the inner textual integrity of logic, and syntax of the narrative in chapter 3. The intertextual relationships between the pericope and the remaining texts in the Pentateuch will be explored by syntactically examining of the texts at semantic and thematic level. The theological considerations of the narrative proceed by these scrutinized intra/inter-textual examination of the texts. The final chapter, chapter 5, summarizes some of the advantages of applying the method to the narrative and some exegetical suggestions in terms of pre-critical angle.

Key words

- chiasmic structure (chiasm/ symmetry)
- composition criticism (*Kompositionskritik*)
- composition strategy
- intertextuality (text production/ text reception)
- intratextuality
- langue
- narrative typology
- parallelism
- parole
- pre-critical reading
- semantics
- signified
- signifier
- similarity (rhetorical link)
- text-centered approach
- the Abraham narrative
- the author/the composer
- תולדות structure

Acknowledgments

I cannot imagine what the last eight years would have been like without God's love constantly enriching my existence, and His continual encouragement helping me and my family with my doctoral work, as with so much else in life.

This work would also have not been possible without the assistance of various people and bodies. Especially the final stages of doctoral studies are full of debts of gratitude. It is, of course, virtually impossible to name all of the people who have helped me along the way. I am thankful to everyone who helped make this thesis a reality; in particular, I would like to thank the following;

I am very grateful to my supervisor and mentor, Professor Jurie le Roux for his help during my doctoral study and subsequently: he has been able to give me full of wise advices and at the same time to avoid forcing his own opinions onto me. I am appreciative of the direction Professor G. T. M. Prinsloo and P. J. Botha of the Semitic Department of the University of Pretoria, gave in the early stages of my proposal and later, in conversation about the semantic study on the Abraham narrative. I have also been benefited from the interest taken in me and my work by Professor J. H. Sailhamer of the Department of Old Testament Theology at the Southeastern Theological Baptist in USA, albeit have never been met before. Thanks are also due to the faculty at the Reformed Theological Seminary in Korea, especially Professor S. T. Sohn and Professor K. C. Kim those who challenges and encouragement have motivated and taught me along the way.

To be able to complete the present study is in itself a reflection of the sacrificial love of many individual Christians and Churches I received. Without the spiritual and

financial support of the churches, the present work would not have been started and completed. In this, I would like to express my thanks to Rev. Y. I. Park, my spiritual father, and Kangsung Presbyterian Church, who have given the major spiritual and financial support. I must also express my gratitude to Rev. C. H. Lee and Boopyung Kangsung Presbyterian Church for the persistent prayer, love and support. Moreover, special thanks go to the unfailing love and concern given by Rev. J. H. Jo and Kocheon Central Church. In addition, a number of friends have also contributed to the cost of maintenance for my family and my study over the past eight years. Of these, I particularly wish to thank Elder M. Y. Shin; K. M. Lee; Deacon S. B. La; S. H. Kim; J. H. Lee; J. O. Kim; D. K. Jo; S. N. Jeon; H. T. Kim and Miss E. Y. Cheon.

Finally, words cannot express the debt which I owe to my family in Korea for all the love and concern which they have so unselfishly shown to me and my family during the writing of this thesis. Without their love and encouragement, this work might never have seen the light of day. A final word of gratitude has to be reserved for my wife, Jeong Eun, who has persistently given her help and companionship, especially over the past eight years. Nor dare I ignore out my children Seok-Hee (Paul), La-In, Shin-Hee, and Seung-Hee (David), who constantly remind me in a rich variety of ways that life is much more than books and a word-processor.

To God, this book is dedicated with faith.

Abbreviations

Commonly Used Sources

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary, ed. D. N. Freedman, 6 vols., New York, 1992
AnBib	Analecta biblica
<i>AJS</i>	<i>American Journal of Semiotics</i>
<i>ASTI</i>	<i>Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute</i>
<i>BAR</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
<i>BBR</i>	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum lovaniensium
<i>BI</i>	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
<i>BibInt</i>	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
<i>BibRev</i>	<i>Bible Review</i>
BIRS	Bibliographies and Indexes in Religious Studies
BIS	Biblical Interpretation Series
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BL	Bible and Literature
<i>BR</i>	<i>Bible Review</i>
<i>BR¹</i>	<i>Biblical Research</i>
<i>BSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
<i>BZAW</i>	<i>Beihefte zur ZAW</i>
BZAW	Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
<i>CANE</i>	<i>Civilizations of the Ancient Near East</i> (ed. J M Sasson; New York, 1995)
CBC	Cambridge Bible Commentary
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
<i>CL</i>	<i>College Literature</i>
<i>CurTM</i>	<i>Currents in Theology and Mission</i>
EBC	The Expositor's Bible Commentary, ed. F. E. Gaebelein, 12 vols., Grand Rapids, 1976-1995.

<i>EvQ</i>	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
<i>EvT</i>	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>
FOTL	The Forms of the Old Testament Literature
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
<i>GTJ</i>	<i>Grace Theological Journal</i>
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
<i>HTS</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Studies</i>
<i>HTS^l</i>	<i>Hervormde Teologiese Studies</i>
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>IBS</i>	<i>Irish Biblical Studies</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IDB	The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, ed. G. A. Buttrick, 4 vols., New York, 1962
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
ISBL	Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature
ITC	International Theological Commentary
<i>JAAR</i>	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JBQ</i>	<i>Jewish Bible Quarterly</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JLS</i>	<i>Journal of Literary Studies</i>
JPS	Jewish Publication Society translation
<i>JR</i>	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>MLN</i>	<i>Modern Language Notes</i>
NAC	New American Commentary
NEB	New English Bible
<i>NGTT</i>	<i>Nederduits gereformeerde teologiese tydskrif</i>
NIBC	New International Biblical Commentary
NICOT	The New International Commentary on the Old Testament

<i>NIDOTTE</i>	<i>The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i>
OBT	Overtures to Biblical Theology
OTG	Old Testament Guides
OTL	Old Testament Literary
<i>PT</i>	<i>Protestantische Texte</i>
PTMS	Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series
<i>RQ</i>	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series.
SSEJC	Studies in Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity
<i>StudBT</i>	<i>Studia biblica et theologica</i>
<i>TDOT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> , ed. G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren
<i>ThDig</i>	<i>Theology Digest</i>
<i>TNB</i>	<i>The New Blackfriars</i>
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
<i>TTod</i>	<i>Theology Today</i>
<i>TWAT</i>	<i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament</i> , ed. G. J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren, 8 vols., Stuttgart, 1970-1995.
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
<i>WW</i>	<i>Word & World</i>
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZB	Zürcher Bibelkommentare

Bible Books with Apocrypha

Gen	Isa	Luke
Exod	Jer	John
Lev	Lam	Acts
Deut	Dan	1, 2 Cor



Josh	Hos	Gal
Judg	Joel	Eph
Ruth	Amos	Phil
1, 2 Sam	Obad	Col
1, 2 Kgs	Jonah	1, 2 Thess
1, 2 Chr	Mic	1, 2 Tim
Ezra	Nah	Titus
Neh	Hab	Phlm
Esth	Zeph	Heb
Job	Hag	Jas
Ps (pl. Pss)	Zech	1, 2 Pet
Prov	Mal	1, 2, 3 John
Eccl	Matt	Jude
Song	Mark	Rev
Sir (Sirach, Ecclesiasticus)		

General abbreviations

cf.	<i>confer</i> (compare)
ch(s)	chapter(s)
conj.	conjecture
consec.	consecutive
ed(s)	editor(s), edited by
e.g.	<i>exempli gratia</i> (for example)
esp.	especially
ET	English translation
et al.	<i>et alii</i> (and others)
f(f).	<i>folio(foliis)</i> ([and] on the [following] page[s])
hi.	hiphil
idem	the same
i.e.	<i>id est</i> (that is)
impf.	imperfect
masc.	masculine
p(p)	page(s)



pf.	perfect
q.	qal
sing.	singular
tr.	translation, translated (by)
v(v).	verse(s)

Table of Contents

Summary	iii
Key words	v
Acknowledgement	vi
Abbreviations	viii

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. Rationale for This Study: A Peculiarity of Methods	1
1.1.1. Aim and Objectives	11
1.1.2. Central Theoretical Argument	14
1.2. Methodological Considerations	16
1.2.1. Composition Criticism	20
1.2.2. Intertextuality: A Theoretical Inquiry for Its Meaning and Praxis	32
1.2.2.1. Historical Survey of Intertextuality: Its Quickening and Dissemination	33
1.2.2.2. Intertextuality: Its Origin and Variety: ‘No Text is an Island’	38
1.2.2.3. The Limited Sense of Intertextuality	48
1.3. Summary and Sequence	54

Chapter Two: The Structural and Literary Analysis of the Abraham Narrative

2.1. Introduction	56
2.2. The Abraham Narrative Within the Larger Context of the Pentateuch	58
2.3. The Composition of the Abraham Narrative	70
2.3.1. Literary Delimitation of the Abraham Narrative	70
2.3.1.1. The Starting Point of the Abraham Narrative	72
2.3.1.2. The End of the Abraham Narrative	75
2.3.2. Literary Demarcation of the Abraham Narrative: Its Narrative Episodes and Unity	78
2.3.2.1. The Prologue (Gen 11:27-32)	82

2.3.2.2. The Main Cycle (Gen 12:1-22:19)	87
2.3.2.3. The Epilogue (Gen 23:1-25:11)	92
2.4. Conclusion	94

Chapter Three: The Intra (Inner-) textual Relatedness of the Abraham Narrative

3.1. Introduction: Methodological Indications	96
3.2. The Prologue: Terah's Genealogy (Gen 11:27-32)	98
3.2.1 Thematic Links	100
3.2.1.1. Posterity: Sarah's Barrenness	100
3.2.1.2. Land: Ur and Canaan	107
3.2.2. Textual Links	110
3.2.2.1. Terah's Death (Gen 11:32) and Noah's Obituary (Gen 9:29)	110
3.2.2.2. Terah's and Nahorite Genealogies (Gen 11:27-32//22:20-24)	111
3.2.2.3. Two Introductions (Gen 11:27-32//25:19-26)	113
3.2.2.4. Semantic Ties (Gen 11:27-32//23:1-25:11)	114
3.2.2.5. Characters Links: Abraham, Lot and Nahor	115
3.2.2.6. Geographical Shift	116
3.3. The Main Section (Gen 12:1-22:19)	117
3.3.1. Thematic Links	117
3.3.1.1. Seed	118
3.3.1.2. Land	121
3.3.1.3. Blessing	122
3.3.2. Textual Links	125
3.3.2.1. Divine Promissory Call and Abraham's Obedience (Gen 12:1-9)	126
3.3.2.1.1. Structure	126
3.3.2.1.2. Call and Test (Gen 12:1-9//22:1-19)	133
3.3.2.1.3. Compliance (Gen 12:1-7) and Disembarkation (Gen 8:15-20)	137
3.3.2.2. Jeopardy and Separation (Gen 12:10-13:18)	139
3.3.2.2.1. Structure	139
3.3.2.2.2. Ordeals and Parting (Gen 12:10//13:18//20:1-21:34)	144
3.3.2.2.3. Sarah in Foreign Harem (Gen 12:1-20//20:1-18)	145
3.3.2.2.4. Peace and Success (Gen 13:1-4//21:22-34)	146

3.3.2.2.5. Separation from Lot/Ishmael (Gen 13:5-18//21:1-21)	147
3.3.2.2.6. Conflicts: Abraham/Lot (Gen 13:6) and Jacob/Esau (Gen 34:7)	149
3.3.2.2.7. Wife-Sister Episodes (Gen 12:10-20//20:1-19// 26:1-13)	150
3.3.2.2.8. Abraham/Lot (Gen 13, 14) and Sodom (Gen 18:1-19:38)	155
3.3.2.2.9. Abraham and Lot Parting (Gen 13) and Deconstruct- ions of Sodom (Gen 19:1-29) and Babylon (Gen 11:1-9)	157
3.3.2.3. Abraham's Intercession for Sodom and Lot (Gen 14:1-24)	160
3.3.2.3.1. Structure	160
3.3.2.3.2. War/Rescue (Gen 14:1-24) and Pleading/Judgment (Gen 18:16-19:38)	164
3.3.2.4. Covenant with Abraham (Gen 15:1-16:16)	165
3.3.2.4.1. Structure	165
3.3.2.4.2. Making Two Covenants and Annunciation (Gen 15:1-16:16//17:1-18:15)	168
3.3.2.4.3. Two Covenants (Gen 15:1-21//17:1-27)	169
3.3.2.4.4. Two Annunciations (Gen 16:1-16//18:1-15)	174
3.3.2.4.5. Episodes of Hagar and Ishmael (Gen 16:1-16 //21:8-21)	175
3.3.2.4.6. Human Plan for Blessing (Gen 16:1-16//3:6//4:25 //12:3)	177
3.3.2.5. Covenant with Abraham (Gen 17:1-18:15)	179
3.3.2.5.1. Structure	179
3.3.2.5.2. Abrahamic/Noahic Covenant (Gen 17//6-9)	182
3.3.2.6. Abraham's Intercession for Sodom and Lot (Gen 18:16-19:38)	183
3.3.2.6.1. Structure	183
3.3.2.6.2. Sodom-Lot Episodes (Gen 18-19) and the Flood Narrative (Gen 6-9)	184
3.3.2.6.3. Parallels (Gen 18//19)	187
3.3.2.7. Jeopardy and Separation (Gen 20:1-21:34)	191
3.3.2.7.1. Structure and Textual Links	191
3.3.2.8. Divine Promissory Commands and Abraham's Obedience	

(Gen 22:1-19)	197
3.3.2.8.1. Structure and Textual Links	197
3.4. The Genealogy of Nahor (Gen 22:20-24)	201
3.5. The Epilogue (Gen 23:1-25:11)	203
3.6. Concluding Summary	204
Chapter Four: The Intertextual Relationship of the Abraham Narrative	
4.1. Introduction: Methodological Considerations	205
4.2. Thematic Links	206
4.2.1. The Seed	207
4.2.2. The Land	208
4.3. Textual Links	214
4.3.1. The Divine Promise (Gen 12:1-9//49:8-21//Num 24)	214
4.3.2. Abraham Itinerary to Egypt (Gen 12:10-20)	222
4.3.3. The Instruction of War with Foreign Nations (Gen 14:13-16//Deut 20:1-15)	226
4.3.4. Abrahamic Covenant and Sinai Covenant	228
4.3.5. The Compositional Resemblance (Gen 15-17//Exod 24-34)	232
4.3.6. The Analogies Between the Hagar Episodes (Gen 16:1-16 //21:8-21) and Related Texts in the Remainder of the Pentateuch	234
4.3.7. “Walk with God” in the Pentateuch	238
4.3.8. The Woman-at-the-Well (Gen 24, 29//Exod 2)	241
4.4. Conclusion	244
Chapter Five: Conclusion	
5.1. Hermeneutical Reflections	245
5.1.1. Composition Criticism	245
5.1.2. Intertextuality	246
5.2. Theological Reflections	247
5.3. Conclusion	252
Bibliography	255