CHAPTER 2

THE STRUCTURAL AND LITERARY ANALYSIS OF THE ABRAHAM

NARRATIVE

2.1. Introduction

As aforementioned, the critical scholarships (the Documentary, Form-critical and Traditio-historical critics), who have been detected the lack of uniformity of style and vocabulary as a sign of the lack of unity in the structure and message of Genesis for the last two years, by dissecting the book into smaller and separate sections according to sources, forms and traditions. Especially, they have argued that the Abraham narrative was a collection of loosely related but narratively independent stories about Abraham (cf. Brodie 2001a:15).[124] They base their conclusion upon form critical and tradition history methodology with its presuppositions of extended literary development. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that very few attempts have been made to see a coherent structure or arrangement of the Abraham narrative in its present form (Skinner 1930; Speiser 1964). In it, the result of the diachronic approaches was that emphasis tended to be placed upon the individual units and original collections, thus missing the integrity of the final form of the text. The approaches by their very nature are not conducive to reading the book and the Abraham narrative in particular as a literary whole.

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[124] C. Westermann, *Genesis 12-36: A Commentary*, trans. J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985), 125, distinguished several different kinds of literary writing here including genealogies, itinerary travel accounts, a series of Lot stories, and a sequence of promise stories, which he contended, were edited into the text.

More recent literary analyses of the Abraham narrative, however, have shed new light on the composition of Genesis. Their works have led to a growing conviction among scholars that the overall structure of the narrative needs more elucidation and elaboration (cf. Adar 1990:9). In what follows, studies on the literary structure of Genesis are thoroughly reviewed and evaluated, and a new understanding of the literary unity is proposed (Alter 1981; Jeansonne 1989:33-52; 1990; 1995:145-152; Minor 1992; Powell 1992; Sternberg 1985; Teugels 1994:89-104; Watson & Hauser 1994). The literary methods have shown that the stories are a meaningful whole, demonstrating this form the many parallels and repetitive patterns that serve to give it order. Many scholarly studies have demonstrated the presence of patterns, especially chiasms (e.g., Alexander[125]). In this view, the Abraham cycle can be characterized by both an easily discernible unity and a noticeable lack of uniformity. Our approach to the preset work in this chapter will follow the suggestions of the literary view to the narrative.

In order to sustain a realistic understanding of the unity of the Abraham narrative, it is necessary to appreciate of the nature of its composition and an understanding of its structure.[126] This chapter, therefore, is going to deal with some literary aspects of the narrative on the basis of the תולדות structure and the 'chiastic' or 'symmetrical' structure as well as anthropological pattern, character development, style or plot, and the use and development of key words or themes. In addition, this chapter will probe

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[125] T. D. Alexander, *A Literary Analysis of the Abraham Narrative in Genesis*, Unpublished Ph. D. Dissertation (Belfast: The Queen's University of Belfast, 1982); cf. Wenham, *Genesi 1-15*, 263, has shown the careful integration of the whole cycle by demonstrating that a chiastic arrangement is used to order the stories.
[126] For the material arrangement implies the purpose of the author/the final composer, and that in turn suggests a central concern or integration point that gives a unit its meaning and direction.

the fact that the whole of the narrative is carefully constructed and unified by palistrophic writing and internal linking (cf. McEvenue 1971:185; Wilson 1997:73[127]).[128] Consequently, the cycle in this chapter will be treated as skillful works of art, maintaining the integrity of form and content in a way of appreciating its structural and unity features. By doing so, one is properly able to distinguish major and minor aspects of the narrative. Three considerations will undergird the procedure of literary analysis of the narrative itself in this chapter: 1) the narrative within the larger context of the Pentateuch; 2) the composition of the narrative, namely, its overall structure and unity; and 3) the demarcation of the each literary unit in the narrative in sequence.

2.2. The Abraham Narrative within the Larger Context of the Pentateuch

The meaning of a section or periscope is found not merely within the section or periscope but in its context especially when one read a literary work within a complex narrative structure (like the Pentateuch). For literary context is a clue both to meaning

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[127] V. M. Wilson, *Divine Symmetries: The Art of Biblical Rhetoric* (Lanham: University of America Press, 1997) comments on artistic design within text as follows:

> It seems remarkable to us that a writer could have as many as three or four mutually compatible patterns, even conventions, overlaid in a single text, each with its own subtle lines of definition. But this is a quite common characteristic of Scripture, and indeed one familiar in our own times in the layered plot developments of modern novels.

His comment is striking because of its implications for the structuring of the Abraham narrative. While poetry is a different genre, it has been demonstrated that several kinds of parallelisms may be used by an author in a single text. See, A. Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 127, and J. Worgul, "The Quatrain in Isaianic Poetry," *GTJ* 11 (1990): 187-204.
[128] The literary pieces, for instance, narrative, genealogy, and itineraries, some previously written and some original compositions by the author/the final composer, have been brought together by him, who forms them an unmistakably coherent, unified story line. The organizing principle with these literary pieces for the Abraham narrative is palistrophic.

and to origin. Although the Abraham narrative forms an extensive self-contained narrative unit, this narrative unit has links with both the preceding and the following narrative units in Genesis and in the Pentateuch. It, thus, is worth studying the relationship between the Abraham narrative and the surrounding texts in the book of Genesis and the Pentateuch. From this, the purpose of this section is both to indicate the immediate literary context of the Abraham narrative in Genesis and in the rest of the Pentateuch and examine the narrative location of the Abraham narrative within the context of Genesis 12-50, by analyzing both the interrelations between the various cycles of stories and the scale of each episode.[129]

Having investigated the literary constitution of the Abraham narrative (Gen 11:27-25:11), therefore, two preliminary remarks should be made in this section before discussing in detail its composition, structure and unity of the narrative section.

1. It is important to observe how this Abraham narrative functions within the larger context. Within the literary-theological structure of the book of Genesis, the Abraham narrative functions as a bridge between the Primeval history (Genesis 1-11) and the later sections of Genesis, including a collective future as a people (i.e., Exodus and beyond).

2. In its form, the Abraham narrative as part of a larger literary unit in the book of Genesis may be structurally considered as constituting one of four major sections, which marks the construction of the book.[130]

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[129] The detailed and comprehensive discussion on the intertextual relationships will be presented in chapters 3 and 4.

[130] In conjunction with constituting of the book of Genesis, we have some divergent opinions. On the one hand, Rendtorff, *The Problem of the Process of Transmission of the Pentateuch*, prefers to view

To begin with, as many critics have observed[131], the book of Genesis can be into four narrative parts: the Primeval History (Gen 1-11:26), the Abraham cycle (Gen 11:27-25:18)[132], the Jacob cycle (Gen 25:19-36), and the Joseph narrative (Genesis 37-50) by the תולדות formula.[133] Besides the the תולדות structure, however, there are some further attempts to delineate the overall structure and unity of Genesis, which are initiated and accelerated by a number of the literary critics. They have tried to establish the unity of Genesis through anthropological pattern (Carroll 1977:663-677; 1985:127-135)[134], diptych style or plot (Brodie 2001a; 2001b)[135], the development approach

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Genesis as composed of five blocks of material, including the Isaac cycle between the Abraham and Jacob cycles. On the other hand, G. J. Wenham, *Numbers*, TOTC (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1981), 17, presents that Genesis falls into three primeval story sections and three patriarchal cycles: the story of Abraham in Gen 11:27-25:11; the story of Jacob in Gen 25:19-35:29; the story of Joseph in Gen 37:1-50:26 (On the general structural division of Genesis, cf. Coats, *Genesis*, 14, 16, 28-29; J. E. Hartley, *Genesis*, NIBC 1 [Peabody: Hendrickson & Paternoster Press, 2000], 3-15; Speiser, *Genesis*, liii-lx). While differing in certain respects, however, both of the two scholars regard the Abraham cycle as a unified section. In its literary context, the book of Genesis can clearly be divided into four major narrative blocks which comprise the entire book: the primeval history of mankind (Gen 1-11:26), the Abraham narrative (Gen 11:27-25:11) that tells the life history of Abraham and his family, the Jacob Cycle (Gen 25:19-35:29) with a few details of his father Isaac and brother Esau, and the Joseph story (Gen 37:2-50:26). The unity of Genesis in particular has long been recognized and in recent years has attracted considerable attention. For instance, see Coats' work, *Genesis*, 259-315. For similar divisions, see von Rad, *Genesis*, 5-7; A. P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 7-9, 35, and C. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, trans. J. J. Scullion (London & Minneapolis: SPCK & Augsburg, 1984), ix-x.

[131] See, Fox, "Can Genesis Be Read as a Book?," 31-40; J. P. Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Narrative. An Introductory Guide*, trans. I. Smit (Lousiville: Westminster & John Knox Press, 1999). 158-59; G. G. Nicol, "The Chronology of Genesis: Genesis XXVI 1-33 as "Flashback,"" *VT* 46 (1996): 330-38; and G. Rendsburg, *The Redaction of Genesis* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1986).

[132] For the dissimilar textual scope of the Abraham narrative adopted in this work, see the section of the literary delimitation of the Abraham narrative (2.3.1) in pp. 70-78.

[133] For the function of the the תולדות formula, see below notes 162-164 in pp. 76-77.

[134] His approach, so-called "modified structural anthropology" has been tried to find interrelated patterns and styles underlying a variety of myths by employing established structuralist principles put forward by Edmund Leach and Claude Lévi-Strauss. He applies the results of this research to find common patterns and styles beneath many of the similar stories in Genesis: the fall of man, Cain and Abel, Noah and Ham, Lot and his daughters, Esau and Jacob, and Joseph and his brothers. He restates it in the form of two propositions: the incest taboo and the incestuous relationship ("Leach, Genesis, and Structural Analysis: A Critical Evaluation," *American Ethnologist* 4 [1977]: 673). His observation that there some common patterns utilized by the author/the final composer tends to confirm that there was a deliberate plan for the book of Genesis.

[135] Brodie contends that the entire book of Genesis consists of twenty-six diptychs as a key to narrative unity and meaning. In other words, each of diptychs has tow parts or panels, which means that Genesis is binary in that it involves balance and a structure illustrated by the pattern, "AA', BB', CC', DD',...." (*Genesis as Dialogue*, 12, 18-19; "Genesis as Dialogue: Genesis Twenty-Six Diptychs as a Key to

(Cohn 1983:3-16)[136] in character (Brode 2001a:12-15) and in key or theme-words

(Alexander 1993:255-270)[137], and thematic connections (Mann 1991:341-353)[138] and

so forth.

Narrative Unity and Meaning," in *Studies in the Book of Genesis*, BETL, ed. A. Wénin, [Leuven: Leuven University & Peeters, 2001b], 300). He also divides the book into four basic stories or dramas: Adam-Noah (Gen chs 1-11), Abram-Abraham (Gen 12:1-25:18), Jacob (Gen 25:19-37:1), and Joseph (Gen 37:2-50:26). According to Brodie (*Genesis as Dialogue*, 15), they in turn can be reduced to two complex groups, each of which contains a double drama: 1) the Adam-Noah and Abram-Abraham Cycles, which are connected by the idea of covenant (Gen 9:8-17 and Gen chs 15, 17); and 2) the Jacob and Joseph Cycles, which together recount the life of Jacob, womb to tomb (Gen 25:19-50:26). His analysis exposes the characteristic continuity and interconnectedness between materials in Genesis by means of structural, thematic or key-word relations despite the two weakness of his approach: presenting partially strong element of parallelism and lack of providing a unified message of the book.

[136] Cohn in his approach termed "developmental" suggests that Genesis displays in its final form a four or five stage development of divine presence and human character: 1) the story of Adam and Eve; 2) the story of Noah and Flood; 3) the Abraham Cycle; 4) the Jacob Cycle; and 5) the story of Joseph and his brothers. According to him, human character is being transformed from the simple and fragile (Adam and Eve) to the complex (Joseph). Divine character development moves from anthropomorphic and myth-like descriptions of direct actions by God to a God who is present silently within the events. The narrative styles among the human and divine character development also move from simple and episodic to complex and unified. The development theory demonstrates well that "Genesis is not a collection of episodes that are loosely connected or poorly edited" (Brodie, *Genesis as Dialogue*, 15), as well as that the continuous involvement of God from mythic world to real history. His approach exposes the inseparable relationship between world history (i.e., the Primeval history) and the history of Israel (i.e., the Patriarchal history). Thus, Cohn, in this sense, demonstrates well the literary and theological integrity of Genesis.

[137] Alexander, "Genealogies, Seed and the Compositional Unity of Genesis," 258-59, states that Genesis has been carefully formed to accentuate an important family line from Adam to the sons of Jacob. This fact is underlined by two distinctive literary features: the תולדות headings and the repeated Hebrew word זרע ("seed"), which closely linked to the genealogical structure of Genesis. From this sense, he contends that when the book is viewed as a whole, it is very apparent that the תולדות structure and the concept of זרע ("seed") are closely connected to underline a single, distinctive lineage, which will eventually become a royal dynasty. The two key-words play a crucial role by gathering all the events around them and offering a unifying narrative flow to the stories ("Genealogies, Seed and the Compositional Unity of Genesis," 260, 269).

[138] Mann suggests that Genesis has a thematic and theological unity despite it consist of various different sources ("All the Families of the Earth: The Theological Unity of Genesis"). He holds that the central theological focus that unites the book is the divine promise of blessing (esp., Yahwistic and Priestly sources) that God makes to the patriarchs (Gen 12:1-3; Gen 26:2-4; Gen 28:13-14; Gen 35:9-12; Gen 46:1-4). Mann maintains that the divine promise to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3) is elaborated in the patriarchal narratives that follow, and anticipated in the Primeval stories that precede, where the promise of blessing contrasts with the motif of the curse (Gen 3:14-19; Gen 4:11; Gen 8:21; Gen 9:25-26) ["All the Families of the Earth: The Theological Unity of Genesis," 344]. In his conclusion, he states that the promise of blessing through Abraham to all the families of the earth offers a resolution to the primeval cycle, which otherwise contains no narrative resolution, but just recurring problems (disobedience, fratricide, and curses, etc.). Thus, in his scheme, Genesis goes from tension (i.e., partial fulfillment) to resolution (complete fulfillment). In this way, the book of Genesis is closely connected to the larger corpus comprising the Pentateuch.

The other oft-discussed literary structure reconstructed by several other scholars is "the chiastic structure" or "chiasm[139]" (cf. Welch 1981:10), which was a deliberate literary device very often employed by ancient writers (cf. Welch 1981:9-10).[140] Most recently, David A Dorsey (1999), recognizing several structuring pattern in the Old Testament, such as chiasm (symmetry), parallelism[141], and sevenfold patterns, has analyzed the structures of all the books of the Old Testament which are each organized, in his contention, mainly according to the laws of chiasmus.[142] Yet, chiasm[143] is a structural form developed primarily on the basis of parallelism but it is concentrically inverted parallelism (Breck 1999:254, 256). Thus, the laws of chiasm coincide in many ways with those of parallelism since both structures are basically fashioned by repetition (Dorsey 1999:28). Using chiastic structure as an interpretative tool biblical scholars

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[139] The term "chiasm" is derived from the crisscross shape of the Greek letter Chi (X). The uniqueness of the chiastic structure lies in its focus on a pivotal idea (either a singly central or two complementary central elements), around which the other parts of corresponding elements are developed in reverse order (cf. J. Breck "Biblical Chiasmus: Explorig Structure for Meaning," *BTB* 17 [1987]: 71; D. A. Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis-Malachi* (Grand Rapids: BakerBooks, 1999), 30; R. E. Man, "The Value of Chiasm for New Testament Interpretation," *BSac* (1984), 146-47.

[140] For more information of the chiasmus structure, see below note 148-149 in pp. 66-67.

[141] The term describes a very particular structural relationship between two lines. Thus, it refers to an analogously structural notion: the repetition of a syntactic pattern. In other words, it is understood the regularly recurring juxtaposition of symmetrically constructed sentences (cf. E. L. Greenstein, "How Does Parallelism Mean?" In *A Sense of Test: The Art of Language in the Study of Biblical Literature [Papers from a Symposium at The Draopsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning May 11, 1982]* [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1982b], 41-70.

[142] See, especially the introductory section (*The Literary Structure of the Old Testament*, 15-44) in his work. Meanwhile, J. Breck, *The Shape of Biblical Language* (New York: SVS Press, 1994), 235-39, presents four laws of chiasm: 1) Chiastic units are framed by inclusions; 2) The central element (or pair of elements) serves as the pivot and/or thematic focus of the entire unit; 3) A heightening effect occurs from the first parallel line of strophe to its prime complement; and 4) The resultant concentric or spiral parallelism, with progressive intensification from the extremities inward, produces a helical movement that draws the reader/hearer toward the thematic center.

[143] This term is also generally called "inverted parallelism." It is commonly accepted as chiasm by most scholars (cf. M. Dahood, "Chiasmus," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Supplementary Volume [Nashville: Abingdon, 1976], 145; J. Limburg, "Psalms, Book of," in *ABD*, vol. 5 [New York: Doubleday, 1992], 528-29; J. Staley, "The Structure of John's Prologue: Its Implications for the Gospel's Narrative Structure," *CBQ* 48 [1986], 241-64; Bar-Efrat, *Some Observations of the Analysis*, 154-173), however, uses different names for the different forms of symmetry as follows: AA' (parallel pattern), ABB'A' (chiastic pattern), AXA' (ring pattern), and ABXB'A'.

have been able to explain and account for repetitions, doublets and inconsistencies such as conflicts in meaning, historical order and emphases that sporadically exist in the Bible. The Documentary Hypothesis and its variations have never given the proper explanations for these problematic textual elements. But with the intervention of chiastic structural analysis we come to recognize the hand of the biblical writers at work, carefully organizing sources to achieve specific narrative goals. The discovery of the coherence of the chiasm in a text, therefore, suggests that the text, which is examined has an essential unity (Brodie 2001a:12; Dorsey 1999:31).
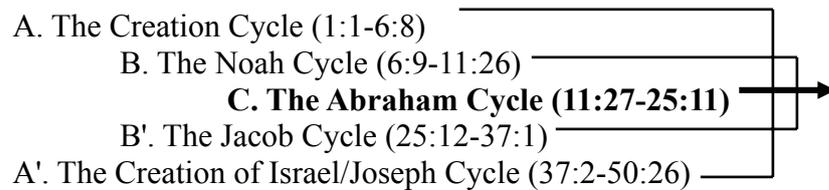
As seen above, each of these approaches to the structure of Genesis holds a certain amount of truth, but none of them can encompass all the aspects of literary features of Genesis. Thus, a crucial thing that needs to be verified is which one is the major structural device into, which other approaches are incorporated.

Having carefully attended to the comparisons and observations of the critics' structural analyses of Genesis presented above, the need of an alternative (chiastic) structure recognizes and honors Genesis' status as a self-contained unit. Amid many scholars who have tried to reconstruct the structure of Genesis, the present work had mainly consulted the views of David A Dorsey (1999:47),[144] J P Fokkelman ([1975] 1991),[145]

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[144] In his analysis, Genesis is divided into five major units: 1) Yahweh and the pre-Abrahamic ancestors of Israel (Gen 1:1-11:32); 2) Yahweh and Abraham (Gen 12:1-21:7); and 3) Yahweh and Isaac (Gen 21:8-28:4); 4) Yahweh and Jacob (Gen 28:5-37:1), and Yahweh and Joseph (Gen 37:2-50:26). Each major unit also has its own complex chiastic structure and chiastic sub-structures. The main peculiarity in his unit divisions is the careful treatment of the Isaac story as an independent unit, a notion that most scholars have abandoned.

[145] In the study of Genesis, which concentrates primarily on the interrelationship between materials in the Jacob story, emphasizes the use of key-words (i.e., theme-words), alliterations, assonances, and parallel and chiastic structure. He demonstrates that theme-words, alliterations and assonances clearly illustrate that the author/the final composer of the story had a detailed design for his work and had a message to be delivered as effectively as possible. In the same vein, the parallel and chiastic structures within a story also exhibit the artistic skill of the author/the final composer in selecting and arranging the materials at his disposal.
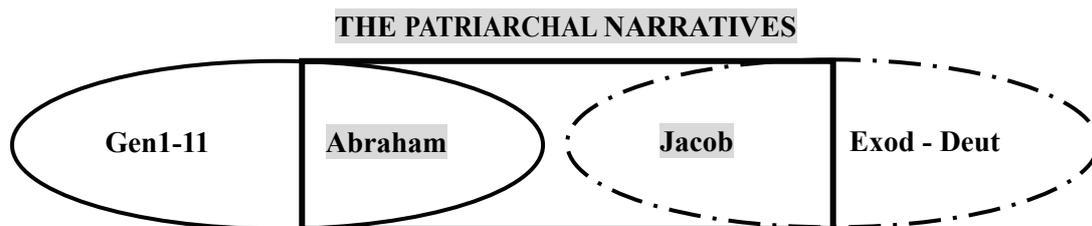
and Gary A Rendsburg (1986).[146] The system presented here divides the book of Genesis into five literary cycles. Consequently, in the larger context of Genesis, the structure of the book can be illustrated as follows:

A. The Creation Cycle (1:1-6:8)
    B. The Noah Cycle (6:9-11:26)
        C. The Abraham Cycle (11:27-25:11)
    B'. The Jacob Cycle (25:12-37:1)
A'. The Creation of Israel/Joseph Cycle (37:2-50:26)

This chiastic structure differs somewhat from the structures, which other scholars have reconstructed, who observed above. The Noah cycle (i.e., the Flood story) had dealt with independently from the Primeval History because it has its own life and quality (Wenham 1978:336-348). The Noah cycle concludes the previous cycle, that is, the Creation cycle with the annihilation and new creation of the world, and opens up a new horizon for the following cycle, the Abraham cycle, with a covenant theme. Thus the Noah cycle provides a hinge upon, which the previous and following cycles turn (cf. Alexander 1983:17-22; Steinmetz 1994:193-207). Although this arrangement collapses the genealogical list of Esau, it has the advantage of recognizing the Noah and Jacob accounts as the central episodes in each half of the early history and the patriarchal narratives (cf. Blenkinsopp 1992:58-59. 98-100). In this five-fold arrangement, the Abraham narrative situates in the pivotal position as the center of the chiastic structure.

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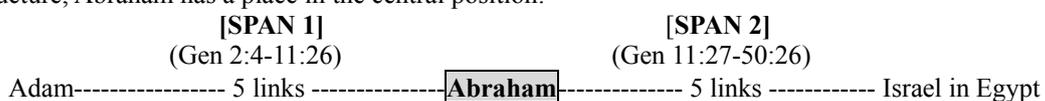
[146] He deals with Genesis on its own and demonstrates two parallel and three chiastic structures in it. He divides the book into four units: 1) The Primeval History (Gen 1-11:26); 2) The Abraham Cycle (Gen 11:27-22:24); 3) The Jacob Cycle (Gen 25:19-35:22); and 4) The Joseph Story (Gen 37:1-50:26). Two sections, namely, Gen 23-25:18 and Gen 35:23-36:43 is omitted from the major units and set aside as "Linking materials." According to him the Abraham, Jacob and Joseph Cycles are each arranged chiastically, while the Primeval History and the Linking materials are arranged in parallel fashion. Throughout the analysis, Rendsburg defines symmetrical units in terms of their shared vocabulary and theme.

This structure demonstrates that the Abraham narrative contains strikingly explicit references to the Primeval history, in a way that scene after scene in the narrative receives its depth and precise nuance of meaning from the way they take up and repeat or transform themes and image anchored in the preceding chapters. If they seem to be implicitly referred to in the narrative that is because they are everywhere presupposed and echoed. The Abraham narrative within the larger whole literary units, the patriarchs (Genesis 12-50), therefore, has close links with both the preceding and the following narrative units and the remainder of the Pentateuch as well.[147] The linkage of narrative cycle can thus be sketched as follows:

THE PATRIARCHAL NARRATIVES

In this sense, one may examine the interrelatedness between the Abraham narrative and the rest of the patriarchal narratives in terms of narrative framework. In very general terms, the תולדות formula, which functions as a signal to show the movement from creation to Israel in Egypt (Gen 2:4-50:26) in the narratives of Genesis, largely divides the narratives from Abraham to Jacob into five structural divisions: Abraham (Gen

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[147] W. VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption: From Creation to the New Jerusalem* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1988), 70-73, states that the תולדות formula as a linkage, which looks at the past as a series of interrelated events, forms a bridge between creation and the story of Israel in Egypt, using ten separate structural components. The first five components span the primeval history (Gen 2:4-11:26), whereas the last five components span the story of the Abraham till Israel arrives in Egypt (Gen 11:27-50:26). The bridge from Adam to Israel, thus, consists of two spans, each consisting of five links. In this structure, Abraham has a place in the central position:

<div align="center">

[SPAN 1]   **[SPAN 2]**
(Gen 2:4-11:26)   (Gen 11:27-50:26)

Adam----------------- 5 links --------------**Abraham**-------------- 5 links ------------ Israel in Egypt

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11:27-25:11), Ishmael (Gen 25:12-18), Isaac (Gen 25:19-35:29), Esau (Gen 36:1-37:1), and Jacob (Gen 37:2-50:26). In this basic narrative skeleton of the patriarchal narratives, there is a possibility to examine some interrelations between the patriarchal narratives. First of all, the Abraham narrative has textual links in terms of being father of each patriarchs from Abraham to Joseph genealogically. Secondly, there are many thematically similarities rather than coincidence between the narrative and that of the patriarchal narratives in the plots of each episode, as Wenham (1987:256-264) pointed out. These parallels functions to recapture and appreciate the authorial intentions and motives. Thus, each cycle of the stories must be read in the light of the others and each episode ought to be compared with other similar episodes. Thirdly, the Abraham narrative structurally plays as a bookend of the patriarchal history with that of Jacob, which means that the narrative balances the cycle of Jacob. Since each of the patriarchal narratives strikingly shows the difference of the length. As it were, the two narratives for Abraham and Jacob each have fourteen chapters, and the Isaac's account is about ten chapters. While on the other, the narratives of Ishmael and Esau who are set aside as not being heirs to the covenant and promises are really no more than genealogies, occupying only seven verses and one chapter respectively. In view of that, one may have a chiastic structure of the patriarchal narrative as a whole as follows:

> A. Abraham   11:27-25:11 (a long cycle: the outer frame)
>   B. Ishmael   25:12-18 (a short cycle: the inner frame)
>   **C. Isaac   25:19-35:29 (a long cycle: the core story)**
>   B'. Esau   36:1-37:1 (a short cycle: the inner frame)
> A'. Jacob   37:2-50:26 (a long cycle: the outer frame)

The structure presents the whole palistrophic[148] (or chiastic, concentric, symmetric

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[148] Adopted from S. E. McEvenue, *The Narrative Style of the Priestly Writer*, AnBib 50 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1971), 29, especially note 18. A palistrophe is the arrangement of material in a V-shaped
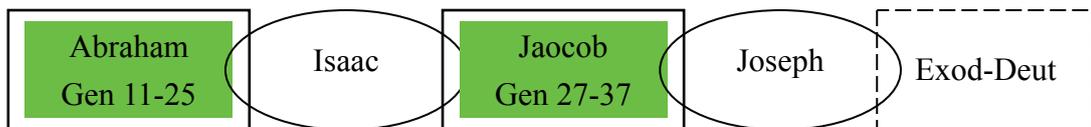
[also called alternating], or introverted) narrative arrangement of the patriarchal narrative structure of Genesis.[149] This symmetric structure suggests that when one considers the amount of material given to the patriarchs themselves, the literary feature of symmetry becomes important. As the structure seen above, the Abraham and Jacob narratives function as the beginning and end of the patriarchal story in terms of composing a longer story than that of Isaac in order to balance the two narratives in very general terms. In the other words, the structural development concentrates on the two major figures, whereas Isaac is a transition figure between them. This mode of narrative pattern reveals the sign of the transmission of divine blessing from Abraham through Isaac to Jacob. In it, Isaac's account plays as a pivot or a hinge for the progress of God's redemptive plan in spite of having no counterpart in the structure (VanGemeren 102-103).

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pattern so that material in each step moving in toward the center mirrors material on the corresponding step moving out from the center as follows:

    A   The Outer Frame
       B   The Inner Frame
          C   **The Core Story**
   B'   The Inner Frame
    A' The Outer Frame

The center itself may or may not be mirrored, and there may be as many steps as an author desires.
[149] One identifies a number of different patterns that are found in the Old Testament and Genesis in particular (Wilson, *Divine Symmetries*, 23, 27-28). These include: 1) a 'parallel pattern' (or "series episodes" structuring) – A-B-C- A'-B'-C' – consist of a series of independent episodes that are put together to create a narrative flow; 2) a "yoke episodes" format – AA'; B-B'; C-C1; D-D' – which is paired episodes whose mutual correspondence enhances each story; 3) a symmetric pattern (or a simple "chiasm" – A-B-C-D- C'-B'-A' – where each part of a story is paired with another part that turns about a center; and 4) an "episodic chiasm" – A-B-C-D-D'-C'-B'-A' – where each episode has its echo, again folded about a center. These terms are the literary arrangement schemes that the biblical writers might use in laying out a composition. The palistrophic patterns have their unique propensity that material in each step moving in toward the center mirrors material on the corresponding step moving out from the center, which itself may or may not be mirrored, and there may be as many steps as an author desires. Chiasmus as "a literary figure, or principle means 'a placing crosswise' of words in a sentence" in particular (N. W. Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1942], 31). It has employed in rhetoric by the biblical authors as a sort of literary device, designating inversion of the order of words or phrase, which are repeated or subsequently referred to in the sentence. For the detailed distinction of the arrangement schemes, see, Bar-Efrat, *Some Obeservations on the Analysis of Structure*, 170-72.

In the meantime, the overall structural framework also be sketched in a different way, one may fittingly scrutinizes that the cycles in which the central figures are Abraham (Genesis 11-25) and Jacob (Genesis 27-37), respectively, are the ones in which the use of the mode of linkage of narrative cycles is most marked (Vosloo 1982:15-22). In this sense, he (1982:15) schematically presents the interrelationships between the two major narratives (i.e., the Abraham cycle and Jacob cycle) and the two narratives (Isaac in Genesis 25-27 and Joseph in Genesis 37-50), which play a subordinate role in the framework. Even though there is no sharp transition on either side, the narrative with the Jacob cycle is closely bound up with its context. The arrangement may be diagrammatically represented as follows:

| Abraham Gen 11-25 | Isaac | Jaocob Gen 27-37 | Joseph | Exod-Deut |

Furthermore, one may see the narrative location of the Abraham narrative within the overall structure of Genesis in terms of type of structure (i.e., parallel and chiastic) and the recurring theme (the threat to the divine promise). In this aspect, Garrett (2000:113), one the one hand, analyzes the work of Rendsburg, *The Redaction of Genesis* (1986:8, 28-29, 53-54, 71, 80) on the structural peculiarity of Genesis, and synthesized attempts to synthesize the verbal parallels between the cycles to establish correspondence between them.

Narrative Sections	Textual Scope	Type of Structure
The primeval history	1:1-11:26	Parallel
The Abraham cycle	11:27-22:24	Chiastic
Linking material	23:1-25:18	parallel with 35:23-36:43
The Jacob cycle	25:19-35:22	Chiastic

Linking material	35:23-36:43	parallel with 23:1-25:18
The Joseph story	37:1-50:26	Chiastic

On the other, Garrett (2000:120-124) suggests another attempt at finding the structural key to Genesis. He considers the overall structure of Genesis from an angle of threats concerning the preservation of the Abrahamic offspring to improve on the work of Kikawada and Quinn those who attempt to relate Genesis to an attested ancient Near Eastern form with regard to origins (i.e., *Atrahasis*, the Babylonian myth of origins) as opposed to the theoretical form and tradition history reconstructions commonly attempted.[150] The series of perils that threaten the fulfillment of the promise of an heir is a recurring theme, which can be traced throughout the subsequent narratives in Genesis. Garrett's approach may be diagrammed as below:

Recurring themes	Contents	Texts
Prologue	Primeval History	1:1-11:26
Transition	Genealogy	11:27-32
Threat	Abraham Cycle	12:1-25:11
Transition	Genealogy	25:12-18
Threat	Jacob Cycle	25:19-35:22b
Transition	Genealogy	35:22c-36:43
Threat	Joseph Cycle	37:1-46:7
Transition	Genealogy	46:8-27
Resolution	Settlement in Egypt	46:28-50:26

However, it is noteworthy that the threats are not merely concerning the progeny, but regarding the blessing to all families of the earth, or the gift of the land; these themes are all placed in jeopardy by the actions of the characters of the narrative in nearly

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[150] See, I. M. Kikawada and A. Quinn, *Before Abraham Was: A Provocative Challenge to the Documentary Hypothesis*, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1987), 36-53. In this work, they recognize a similarity to some degree in the contents of Genesis 1-11 and Atrahasis and propose the thematic and structural parallels between two works to reflect an ancient literary convention.

every episode in the book. In a section of scholarly circles, still raise a question in argument that whether almost any story would not involve the idea of threat and final resolution, especially one including the flood account[151] even though Garrett's approach is helpful in terms of trying to work with the most obvious redactional element in the book (i.e., . תולדות). As Garrett appraised his work, "the validity of this approach is shown by the way that the five major cycles each function separately as part of the structure of the whole."

To conclude the Abraham narrative relates to what follows in the Pentateuch on the analogy of the relation within the framework of the books as we examined above. The relation between the narrative and the rest of the Pentateuch is shown by the way that earlier events foreshadow and anticipate later events, namely, narrative typology as stated above in the section of methodological considerations. The following significant composition of the narrative, therefore, should be considered in the observation of the structure of Genesis.

2.3. The Composition of the Abraham Narrative

2.3.1. Literary Delimitation of the Abraham narrative

Before considering in detail the narrative structure and unity of the Abraham, it is necessary to decide upon the textual scope of the material under investigation. Where does the Abraham narrative commence and conclude?[152] In fact, as Muilenburg

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[151] See, the critique especially in S. E. McCarter, "A New Challenge to the Documentary Hypothesis. Have Modern Scholars Failed to Appreciate the Overall Structure of Genesis 1-11?," *BibRev* (1988): 34-39.
[152] The first concern in analyzing any biblical text is to ascertain its limits, where it begins as a literary

affirms, it is most complicated to define the limits or scope of a complex cycle, and to recognize precisely where and how it begins and where and how it ends. For this reason, there exists great disagreement suggested by scholars on the literary scope of the present form of the narrative. (cf. Coats 1983:103-108[153]; Moberly 1992a:21-26). But with the help of the criteria, a cogent argument can be made for the demarcation of the Abraham narrative. Here can be presented the external and internal criteria for deliminating the Abraham narrative from another and for integrating the units of the cycle in a tight structural pattern.

The external (i.e., surface structures) criteria are easily visible in a text as it meets the eye, that is, literary marker: disjunctive and conjunctive, within the text, which indicate structural divisions and structural techniques. The disjunctive markers distinguish cycles and are of various kinds: the markers of the beginning and end of cycles, which separate one cycle from another, and mark transitions between them, by shifts in time, geography, genealogy and character, as well as in theological viewpoints (Hayes & Holladay 1982:70-71; Robertson 1976:549). Conjunctive markers link various materials within a cycle by maintaining the continuity of thought or unity of presentation. Among these markers are inclusio, the repetition of vocabulary or

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unit and where it ends. Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," 8-9, has established this as a first principle of rhetorical criticism, since a clear perception of limits focuses attention on the formal devices of language and narration employed in the text and so enables the content, substance or theme of the passage to emerge more clearly (cf. G. M. Tucker, "Prophetic Speech," *Int* 32 [1978]: 32-33). In this matter, Baker, "Diversity and Unity," 190, definitely indicates three general categories:

1. syntactical indications of a discontinuity: time, subject , venue.
2. structural indications of the framework of the text: headings, subscripts, summaries, repeated literary patterns or formulae.
3. rhetorical devices which point to a self-contained unit distinct from its context.

[153] Coats, *Genesis*, 97-102, sees the Shem's genealogy in Gen 11:10 as the starting point of the narrative, not that of Terah in Gen 11:27. As G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1987), 256, notes, however, there are difficulties with the proposal because "the same appears to be true of the genealogy of Gen 5:1-32, the last elements of which are found in Gen 9:28-29."

phraseology at the beginning and at the end of a cycle, and echo, the recapitulation of important points within a cycle (Baker 1980:207-211).

The internal criteria can be identified in a structuralist view with deep structures, which have been coded in the text. All literary texts contain distinctive structures, which are coded expressions of the deep structures of the human brain (Dorsey 1999:15; Robertson 1976:549). By decoding these deep structures in the text, one can not merely set the boundaries of a cycle with more certainty, but discover the message of the cycle. Broadly speaking, in Genesis there are two kinds of deep structures coded in the cycles, which can be used as internal criteria for proving unity: chiasm and parallelism as an indication of unity and disunity (Breck 1999:255-256). Chiasm helps the reader to see a story's boundaries that differentiate one story from another. In this sense, chiasm functions as a division marker (a framing device working) between (within) stories and the cycles and thus plays a crucial linking role within it. It also firms a complete story, a story with an identifiable beginning, middle, and end (cf. Wenham 1978:338). Meanwhile, parallelism both sets boundaries between cycles, and exhibits the thematic and theological connection between them. On the basis of these criteria stated above, the delimitation of the Abraham narrative will be discussed in what follows.

2.3.1.1. The Starting Point of the Abraham Narrative (Gen 11:27)

It is a generally accepted fact that the narrative (or Patriarchal History) commences with Gen 11:27 (cf. Rendsburg 1986:27; Sutherland 1983:337-339; Vosloo 1982:15-17; Waltke 2001:193-341; Wenham 1987:256-264; Westermann 1987:96). A close

reading of Genesis actually reveals that the Abraham narrative forms an outer frame to

the narrative.[154] The boundaries of the narrative are defined by the תולדות beginning at

Gen 11:27 and the concluding report on Abraham's death and burial at Gen 25:1-11.

Three evidences textually corroborate that v. 27 should be considered as a textual

pinpoint of the Abraham narrative:

1. The genealogical formula in v. 26 has different form than that of others in vv.

   10b-25, in terms of mentioning the names of three of Terah's sons like Adam and

   Noah, instead of only the chief descendant.[155] Furthermore, in verse 26 the

   identical formulaic language pattern is varied, by excluding referring to the

   individual life period after the birth of his son (cf. Sarna 1981:78):

11:12 וְאַרְפַּכְשַׁד חַי חָמֵשׁ וּשְׁלֹשִׁים שָׁנָה וַיּוֹלֶד אֶת־שָׁלַח:

11:16 וַיְחִי־עֵבֶר אַרְבַּע וּשְׁלֹשִׁים שָׁנָה וַיּוֹלֶד אֶת־פָּלֶג:

11:26 וַיְחִי־תֶרַח שִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה וַיּוֹלֶד אֶת־אַבְרָם אֶת־נָחוֹר וְאֶת־הָרָן:

27 וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת תֶּרַח תֶּרַח הוֹלִיד אֶת־אַבְרָם אֶת־נָחוֹר וְאֶת־הָרָן וְהָרָן הוֹלִיד אֶת־לוֹט:

As the passage presents above, verse 26 shows still similar in form to vv. 16-25

than vv. 27ff., although there are some textual diversities between verses 12-14

and 16-25 in the Shem genealogy.[156] These textual dissimilarities imply that

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[154] In his study of Hebrew narrative, Fokkelmann, *Narrative Art in Genesis*, 239, observes that in the Jacob cycle the genealogies form "an outer frame" to the cycle. Such also may be the case in the Abraham narrative in terms of the divine promise to Abraham. On this basis, there can be general agreement that the narrative begins in Gen 11:27 with the genealogy of Terah.

[155] In structure this genealogical formula is much like that of the formula in the Noah genealogy in Gen 5:32 where mentions Noah's three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth, in terms of mentioning method of their father's sons and functioning the verses in their textual context. Prior to these verses, each genealogical notice contained only the name of one son. However, the two verses similarly list three sons' name. Moreover, Gen 5:32 plays as a concluding mark to the genealogical list from Adam to Noah in Genesis 5. Gen 11:26 roles also as a closing point of the Shem genealogy in the textual context.

[156] In fact, the Shem genealogy in Gen 11:10-26 presents two different genealogical formulae in vv. 12 and 14, and 16, 18, 20, 22 and 24:

    1) subject (with waw conj.) + חיה (q. pf. 3masc. sing.) + the subject's age of childbirth of
       his son + ילד (hi. impf. 3masc. sing. with waw consec.) + the son's name of subject in vv.

the genealogy of Shem is disrupted before v. 27, which mean that the Abraham narrative would have originally commenced with v. 27.

2. Verse 27 which embarks on the literary formula, וְאֵ֙לֶּה֙ תּוֹלְדֹ֣ת תֶּ֔רַח, imports that the Shem genealogy terminates with either v. 25 or v. 26.[157] Both in form and content they differ markedly from vv. 10-26. Nowhere in the preceding list does one find the family details, which occur in vv. 27ff. This impression reinforced by the introduction of the וְאֵ֙לֶּה֙ תּוֹלְדֹ֣ת formula in v. 27 where presents a new beginning, the history that begins with Terah.[158] It suggests that v. 27 functions as a pinpoint of a new section of narrative. Putting aside these observations of textual peculiarities, it is apparent that v. 26 should be considered as part of the preceding genealogy rather than as part of the following Abraham cycle.

3. If one might agree with Clines' suggestion (1997:85) that the list in Shem's genealogy in Gen 11:10-26 creates a link between the primeval and the patriarchal history, then we would expect that the termination of the genealogy would be identical with the start of the Abraham narrative. The cumulative weight of these observations suggests that there can be little doubt that the

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12 and 14.
  2) verb חיה (q. impf. 3masc. with waw consec.) + subject + the subject's age of childbirth of his son + ילד (hi. impf. 3masc. with waw consec.) + the son's name of the subject in vv. 16, 18, 20, 22 and 24.

[157] In style, Gen 11:27a as in Gen 6:8 apparently represents a compositional track by the author/composer to emphasis the beginning of a new phase in human history (cf. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 268). Verse 27 presents a characteristic formula, which introduces the major section throughout Genesis. Moreover, F. M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 301, shows that the formula found in the genealogy of Terah belongs to the type in the primordial history (Gen 5:1; Gen 11:10). In this, it certainly introduces the Abraham narrative. For this characteristic formula, see Cross's work in pp. 301-305.

[158] Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 268, pertinently enunciates this point that "Gen 11:27b is an abridged resumption of Gen 11:26 (a typical opening), and Gen 11:32 is a typical close (cf. Gen 5:5, 8, etc)."

Abraham narrative initiates in Gen 11:27.

2.3.1.2.. The End of the Abraham Narrative (Gen 25:11)

In contrast, designating the close of the Abraham narrative is less problematic. Most commentators have assumed that the narrative closes with a description of the death of Abraham in Gen 25:11 (cf. Cross 1973:303-304; Westermann 1980:56).[159] The limits of the narrative are visibly defined by another תולדות formula in Gen 25:12, which begin with the list of the descendants of Ishmael.[160] The genealogy contextually functions to separate the story of Abraham from the Jacob narrative in Gen 25:19 with the formula. This is an instance why genealogies in Genesis frequently play to separate narrative section (Fokkelmann 1991:239; Westermann 1987:95).

These textual evidences apparently suggest that in its present form the Abraham narrative can clearly be established from Gen 11:27 to Gen 25:11. From this, the Abraham narrative therefore may be roughly laid out as follows:

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[159] While one other, some scholars view Genesis 22 as the end of the Abraham narrative (R. M. A. Davidson, *Genesis 1-11, 12-50*, CBC, NEB [Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979], 98; Rendsburg, *The Redaction of Genesis*, 50-51; D. Sutherland, "The Organization of the Abraham Promise Narratives," *ZAW* 95 [1983]: 337-39).

[160] On the basis of Todorov's scheme for analyzing the structure of narrative plot in the family stories of Genesis with five-stage plan of movement from one state of narrative equilibrium to another (N. Steinberg, "The Genealogical Framework of the Family Stories in Genesis," *Semeia* 46 [1989]: 41-50) argues that the genealogical material in the family stories in Genesis has been organized into three cycles of literature which are structurally parallel: the genealogy of Shem (Gen 11:10-26); the genealogy of Ishmael (Gen 25:12-18) and the genealogy of Esau (Gen 36:1-37:1). If her analysis is correct, the author/composer may have arranged the close of the Abraham narrative cycle before the genealogy of Ishmael (Gen 25:12-18). Each of three family cycles begin with stereotypical language "These are the generations of …" and detail the descendants of Shem, Ishmael, and Esau. These cycles textually and contextually link the genealogies of Terah, Isaac, and Jacob in terms of introducing to the narratives with regard to their progeny and contextually functions as the genealogical superscription to the genealogy of Isaac in Gen 25:19-26, just as the genealogy of Shem and the genealogy of Esau.

The genealogy from Shem to Abraham (11:10-26) תולדת (v. 27)	The Abraham Narrative (11:27-25:11)			The genealogy of Ismael (25:12-18) תולדת (v. 12)
	11:27[161]-22:19	(Nahor's lineage) (22:20-24)	23:1-25:11	

As the diagram has presented above, the Abraham narrative is clearly demarcated by the literary functional formulae (i.e. תולדות[162] - divisions) as the skeletal structure[163]

[161] As we shall observe in more detail later, the genealogy in Gen 11:27-32 not only primarily roles in its context to connect Abraham with the preceding events (cf. Thompson, *The Origin Tradition of Ancient Israel*, 83), as the previous genealogies have done, but to provide the reader with the necessary background information essential for a proper understanding of the Abraham narrative, especially, in terms of introducing the main characters of the narrative – Abram, Sarai and Lot (cf. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 137; cf. Dillard & Longman III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 53; Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament*, 54; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 259). In other words, the pericope is intended to mark the place in the succession of generations where the events that follow take place and also to introduce the family of Abraham. It links with the next unit by introducing the eight significant figures who all are relevant for understanding the events of the narrative to follow except Iscah in Gen 11:29. The pattern of listing eight names then is unlike that far in Genesis, the author/composer has followed a pattern of listing ten names. In doing so, the author/composer leaves the reader uncertain who the ninth and, more importantly, the tenth name who unfolds that their names are shown to be the two sons of Abraham, Ishmael in Gen 16:15, and Isaac in Gen 21:3 (cf. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 137).

[162] The term תולדות itself which occurs 39 times in the Old Testament is the feminine plural noun derived from ילד ('to bear,' 'to bring forth,' 'to beget') mostly in the qal and hiphil, and as such its most literal translation would be 'begettings.' Most often, it occurs in the context of formal genealogies (Genesis and 1 Chronicles) as denoting an account of a man and his descendants or of genealogical calculations for such purposes as that of a military census (e.g., Num 1:20-42; 1 Chr 1:29; 5:7; 7:9). The noun is probably closest to the Hithpael of the verb, a *hapax legomenon*, occurring only in Num 1:18, where it may be translated, 'to get one's descent acknowledged. The LXX translation of the term γεννήσεις (from γεννάω) is an almost exact translation of תולדות. That γενέσεις which is used in classical Greek as the antonym of φθορά ('destruction,' 'ruin,' 'perdition,' 'mortality,' 'the decay of matter') instead is the more frequent translation of תולדות may indicate a broader understanding of the term γεννήσεις than that communicated by the word 'begettings.' The only other translations of תולדות are γενεά in Gen 25:13 and συγγένεια in Exod 6:19 and Num 1:20-42 (cf. M. D. Johnson, *The Purpose of Biblical Genealogies: with special reference to the setting of the genealogies of Jesus* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988], 14-36). תולדות in Genesis used a technical term for method of keeping family and clan records as well as played a signal to demonstrate the movement from creation to Israel in Egypt (Gen 2:4-50:26).

[163] According to VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemtion*, 70-77, the תולדות formula, which reveals structured repetition occurs symmetrically five times in the development from Adam to Abraham and five times in the development from Abraham to Israel in Egypt. The literary linkage is divided into two spans, each consisting of five links: Gen 2:4-11:26 (the first five components span) and Gen 11:27-50:26 (the last five components span), connecting the narratives and genealogies of Gen 11:27-50:26 with that of the primeval history (Gen 2:4-11:26), as well as bridging between creation (Gen 1:1-2:3) and the story of Israel in Egypt (Exodus 1).

in the larger context of Genesis (Buber 1968:25-26)[164], and being framed on both sides

by two genealogies (Gen 11:10-26 and 25:12-18) as well (Westermann 1987:95).[165] In

addition, the narrative is clearly divided into two self-contained larger narrative units,

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[164] One may suggest the function of the תולדות formula in Genesis: 1) the formula throughout Genesis form not only an overall structural framework for the book, but display a partial attempt to link the variegated materials of Genesis into an overarching genealogical system; and 2) it is the תולדות formula combined inseparably with the narrative sections which does convey this message (for the meaning of the combination of the narrative within a genealogical framework; E. Blum, *Die Komposition der Vätergeschichte*, WMANT 57 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1984), 485-90; D. M. Carr, "Βίβλος γενέσεως Revisited: A Synchronic Analysis of Patterns in Genesis as Part of the Torah (Part One and Two)," *ZAW* 110 (1998a, 1998b): 159-72, 327-47, esp.170-72; U. Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961), 99; Steinberg, "Genealogical Framework," 45-47; J. Van Seters, *Prologue to History: The Yahwist as Historian in Genesis* (Louisville: Westminster & John Knox Press, 1992b), 197-99; R. R. Wilson, *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1977), 137, and is a purposeful literary device balancing human free will and divine determinism, and Israel and the other nations, in order to declare Israel's centrality in the history of the world (R. B. Robinson, "Literary Functions of the Genealogies of Genesis," *CBQ* 48 (1986): 608; R. A. Oden, Jr., "Jacob as Father, Husband, and Nephew: Kinship Studies and the Patriarchal Narratives," *JBL* 102 (1983): 195-96; K. R. Andriolo, "A Structural Analysis of Genealogy and Worldview in the Old Testament," *American Anthropologist* 75 (1973): 1657-669). If we do not understand properly the meaning of the combination of narrative within a genealogical framework, we can not grasp the intended theological implication of the author/the final composer in Genesis. In short, it is in this sense that the תולדות formula and the narrative sections participate I the formation of a literary structure in Genesis. The formula which occurs thirteen in Genesis (Gen 2:4a; 5:1; 6:9a; 10:1,32; 11:10, 27a; 25:12a, 13a, 19a; 36:1a, 9a; 37:2a) in each context of Genesis function for two purposes (Fox, "Can Genesis Be Read as a Book?," 34; Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 543-47):

1) an introductory (or the opening) clause that plays as a heading to a major cycle of narratives or to a genealogy in Gen 2:4a; 6:9a; 11:27a; 25:19a; 37:2a (cf. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 145; D. S. DeWitt, "The Generations of Genesis," *EvQ* 48 [1976]: 196-211; P. J. Wiseman, *New Discoveries in Babylonia about Genesis* [London: Marshall, 1936] and id., *Ancient Records and the Structure of Genesis* [Nashville: Nelson, 1985]).

2) a conclusion of a preceding narrative segment in Gen 5:1a; 10:1a; 11:10a, 27; 25:12a, 19; 36:1a, 9a, where the formulae is followed by primarily by narrative material (cf. Mann, *The Book of the Torah*, 12).

In the former, the introductory note should read, "this is the story of …." On the other hand, in the latter "these are the descendants (or generations) of … seems better. The latter then fall into one of two types: 1) the vertical genealogy founded in 5:1ff., the ten-generation genealogy of Adam to Noah, and in Gen 11:10ff., the ten-generation genealogy of Shem to Abraham; and 2) a horizontal or segmented type founded in Gen 10:1, descendants of Shem, Ham and Japheth, in Gen 25:12, the twelve descendants of Ishmael, and in Gen 36:1, 9, Esau's family tree (cf. V. P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapter 1-17*, 2-11). However, it is not always clear whether the formula serves to conclude a section or to introduce a following section, but undoubtedly the formula "suggest a structure for the entire Book of Genesis" (Coats, *Genesis*, 36). Meanwhile, it is strikingly remarkable that whereas the formulae occur eleven times in Genesis (excepting occurs in Gen 10:32 and Gen 25:13), in the rest of the Old Testament it is used on only three occasions (Num 3:1; Ruth 4:18; 1 Chr 1:29).

[165] The genealogy in Gen 11:10-26 which traces the descendants of Shem down to Abraham and his brothers, Nahor and Haran, and the another one in Gen 25:12-18 which outlines the progenies of Ishmael play as a divider of the narrative at the both beginning and ending points. The narrative as a whole thus deals with a succession of generations.

Gen 11:27-22:19 and Gen 23:1-25:11, by the brief genealogy of Nahor in Gen 22:20-24 (cf. Alexander 2002:144).[166] It is, therefore, evident that the תולדות formula is a well organized plan as well as an integral to the whole the narrative.

2.3.2. Literary demarcation of the Abraham narrative: its narrative episodes and unity

Once the extent of the narrative has been determined, the next step is to sketch the macro-structure of the narrative comprising the overall narrative, in order to look its construction and inner logic. Scholars have revealed observations concerning the organization of the Abraham narrative.[167] In the light of these examinations, it is disclosed that the Abraham narrative is so rich in meaning that it is no easy matter to determine the right arrangement or structure on the grounds of content because of the intertwined themes in the narrative.[168] The exact number of episodes is somewhat fluid depending upon one's reading of the text.

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[166] The two divine speeches in Gen 12:1-3 and Gen 22:15-18 compose syntagmatic axis (i.e., an inclusio) of Genesis 12-22 by proceeding linearly with the references to the divine promised in the call of Abraham (Gen 12:1-3). Since the two narrative sections are strikingly similar in substance in spite of their different terminology. As it were, the divine oath in Gen 22:15-18 contextually plays a conclusion to the divine promises in Gen 12:1-3 (cf. R. W. L. Moberly, "The Earliest Commentary on the Akedah [Gen. 22]," *VT* 38 (1988): 322-23 and id., *Genesis 12-50*, OTG [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992a], 73).

[167] For instance, Gunkel, *The Stories of Genesis*, 159-62) has argued the narratives in the Abraham cycle have a preconceived arrangement (i.e., a pre-literary arrangement), organized according to subject matter and structure. By proposing that the type of presentation and the types of narrative play a part in the development of the Abraham cycle Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, not only affirmed Gunkel's observation but also furthered his assessment.

[168] Scholars have identified a number of narrative episodes within the narrative. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 294-95, suggested ten divisions, each of which was a test with three transitional episodes at the end. Alexander, *Literary Analysis*, 24-26, suggests nineteen different episodes, which are subsequently lumped into seven blocks of material that form a chiasmus. Y. T. Radday, "Chiasmus in Hebrew Biblical Narrative," in *Chiasmus in Antiquity*, ed. J. W. Welch (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1981), 104, opts for twelve episodes that again form an inverted parallelism (see, Breck, "Biblical Chiasmus," 70-74) plus some transitional stories at the end.

A close look, however, suggests that as mentioned earlier section the Abraham narrative is clearly divided into three sections, Gen 11:27-32 (the prologue), Gen 12:1-22:19 (the main cycle) and Gen 23:1-25:11[169] (the epilogue) by Nahor's genealogy (Gen 22:20-24) (cf. Waltke 2001:195).[170] The composition of the Abraham narrative can, therefore, be illustrated as below:

The prologue (11:27[171]-32)	The main cycle (12:1-22:19)	The epilogue (23:1-25:11)

In its narrative boundary, it is necessary to obtain a detailed outline of the episodes constituting the overall narrative, not only to provide a framework but also to examine the textual relationship to one another.[172] The actual division of the episodes has a significant bearing upon the text under consideration. Yet there are in effect some difficulties to determine exactly the inclusion or exclusion of a verse, which means where one episode ends and another begins. For this reason, every attempts have been made to determine as accurately as possible the limits of the individual episode. From this, the cycle, in turn, will be divided into thirteen episodes as the basic framework for

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[169] In the basic תולדות structure in Genesis, Gen 23:1-25:11 functions as one of transitions (or the linking material) between the ten new divine initiative in salvation history linking these developments (see, B. K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001], 17-19). This narrative section parallels verbally with Gen 35:23-36:43 (cf. Garrett, *Rethinking Genesis*, 113-14).

[170] One of factors support this proposal is that the material in Gen 22:20-25:18 is a self-contained unit, forming a palistrophic pattern (A. Abela, *The Themes of the Abraham Narrative: Thematic Coherence within the Abraham Literary Unit of Genesis 11, 27-25, 18* [Malta: Studia Editions, 1989], 9). In addition, T. D. Alexander, "Royal Expectations in Genesis to Kings: Their Importance for Biblical Theology," *TynBul* 49 (1998): 202, esp. n. 26, in his work presents a concise explanation of why Gen 22:20-25:11 should be treated as an appendix to the main cycle of the Abraham narrative.

[171] Waltke, *Genesis*, 195, views Gen 11:27a as a typical superscription that separates the book of Genesis. Hence, he sees the first section of the Abraham narrative as from Gen 11:27b-32.

[172] Then here it is necessary to indicate that the division of the Abraham narrative into separate episodes does not automatically imply that these units once existed independently from each other. Of particular use in determining the extent of the individual episodes were the following works: F. I. Andersen, *The Sentence in Biblical Hebrew* (The Hague & Paris: Mouton, 1974), 39; D. W. Baker, "Diversity and Unity in the Literary Structure of Genesis," in *Essays on the Patriarchal Narratives*, eds. A. R. Millard & D. J. Wiseman (Winona Lake: Eisebrauns, 1980), 197-215; J. T. Walsh, *Style and Structure in Biblical Hebrew Narrative* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2001).

the study of the structural analysis of the narrative as follows:[173]

Episode No.	Location	Essential Content
E1	11:27-32	Introduction: genealogy of Terah
E2	12:1-9	YHWH's commands and promises (*progeny* and *land*)
E3	12:10-13:18	Threats to the promise of heir in Egypt: Abraham separation from Lot
E4	14:1-24	Abraham's militarily intercession for Sodom and Lot
E5	15:1-16:16	Covenant with Abraham: the promise of posterity
E6	17:1-18:15	Covenant with Abraham: the promise of posterity
E7	18:16-19:38	Abraham's spiritually intercession for Sodom and Lot
E8	20:1-21:34	Threats to the promise of heir in Gerar: Abraham separation from Ishmael
E9	22:1-19	YHWH's commands and promises: offspring and land
E10	22:20-24	Inclusion: genealogy of Nahor
E11	23:1-20	The death of Sarah
E12	24:1-67	The acquisition of a wife for Isaac
E13	25:1-11	Abraham's death and burial

These episodes constitute a unified story that spans Abraham's adult life in terms of the structural and thematic aspect. The narrative as a whole possesses matching episodes that form a chiastic arrangement, though not a perfect one.[174] Each of episodes has

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[173] Of particular use in determining the extent of the individual episodes were basically the following works: Andersen, *The Sentence in Biblical Hebrew*, 39; Baker, "Diversity and Unity," 197-215; Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*; N. M. Sarna, *Understanding Genesis: The Heritage of Biblical Israel* (New York: Schocken Books, 1970); Rendsburg, *The Redaction of Genesis*; Walsh, *Style and Structure*. Alexander, *Literary Analysis*, 17-19, in his work extends the division of the narrative to nineteen episodes at length.

[174] By gathering episodes into large blocks, Cassuto, A Commentary on the Book of Genesis, 294-96, Rendsburg, *The Redaction of Genesis*, 28-29, and Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 129, "improve" on the

three closely intertwined main themes in conjunction with the divine promise of blessing heir and land (see, Abela 1989:15-125; McKeown 1991, 1997:51-64, 133-144; cf. Turner 1990:51-114), and the pressures and complications which challenge its validity and appear to threaten its fulfillment.[175] Simultaneously, these themes also form the three groups of sub-narrative blocks (E1-E13) and penetrate into these episodes respectively as well. The main cycle that consists of eight smaller units, each with its own parallel, which accordingly can be matched with four episodes, which are then symmetrized. The chief components of the whole, therefore, become clear as below[176]:

A. Genealogy of Terah (11:27-32)[177]

  B. YHWH's commands and promises – offspring and land (12:1-9)

    C. Threats to the promise of heir in Egypt: Abraham separation from Lot (12:10-13:18)

      D. Abraham militarily intercedes with God for Sodom and Lot (14:1-24)

        E. Covenant with Abraham: the promise of posterity (15:1-16:16)

        E′.Covenant with Abraham: the promise of posterity (17:1-18:15)

      D′.Abraham spiritually intercedes with God for Sodom and Lot (18:16-19:38)

    C′.Threats to the promise of heir in Gerar: Abraham separation from Ishmael (20:1-21:34)

  B′.YHWH's commands and promises: offspring and land (22:1-19)

A′. Genealogy of Nahor (22:20-24)[178]

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chiasmus. Also, cf. Alexander, *Literary Analysis*, 24, 26; Coats, *Genesis*, 100; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 263. These scholars have observed that the feature of correspondences among the episodes in essential to the progression of the story.

[175] Yet not only are these themes significant with the Abraham narrative, but they may also be traced throughout the whole of Genesis (cf. J. McKeown, *A Study of the Main Unifying Themes in the Hebrew Text of the Book of Genesis*, Unpublished Ph. D. Dissertation [Belfast: The Queen's University of Belfast, 1991]).

[176] The concentric pattern is on the basis of Cassuto's the underlying structure (*A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 291-300), Sutherland's unique analysis fashion ("The Organization of the Abraham Promise Narratives," 337-43), and Rendsburg's detailed work (*The Redaction of Genesis*, 27-52). This study had merged and changed these structural analyses to arrange the individual subunits.

[177] The prologue includes genealogical material on Abraham and Nahor marriage.

[178] The epilogue includes genealogical material regarding Nahor's line, which is the story of securing a wife for Isaac from that line (Gen 24:1-67), and a list of Abraham's additional children by yet another line (Gen 25:1-4). The two genealogical lines are featured in the final search for a proper wife for Isaac (Genesis 24).

Following this chiastic pattern, three entries bring the Abraham narrative to a close:

A. Sarah's death and burial in the Cave of Machpelah (Gen 23:1-20)
B. The acquisition of a wife for Isaac (Gen 24:1-67)
C. Abraham's death and burial (Gen 25:1-11)

The final three episodes prepare the way for Father Abraham's successor, Isaac. Sarah's death precipitated two preparatory events: 1) the purchase of a burial plot for the Abraham family, his first legal claim to Canaan's soil (chap. 23); and 2) the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah, who took Sarah's place as matriarch (Genesis 24). The final step for Isaac's full succession is the endowment of gifts for and separation of Abraham's other sons by a collateral line (Keturah); this left Isaac as the sole beneficiary of the family fortune after the death and burial of Abraham (Gen 25:1-11). The completion of the transition is affirmed by the concluding verse of the Abraham cycle, "After Abraham's death, God blessed his son Isaac" (Gen 25:11).

2.3.2.1. The Prologue (Gen 11:27-32)[179]

The overture of the Abraham narrative is marked by the toledot formula (Gen 11:27a) at its beginning and by the formulaic summary, namely, Terah's obituary (v. 32).

The prologue (11:27-32)	The main cycle (12:1-22:19)	The epilogue (23:1-25:11)

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[179] Most scholars ordinarily view Gen 11:27-32 as the first literary unit of the Abraham, whereas Alexander, *Literary Analysis*, 19), Coats, *Genesis*, 103-09), C. Westermann, *The Promises to the Fathers: Studies on the Patriarchal Narratives*, trans. D. E. Green (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 132-37, and Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 267) preferably see Gen 11:27-12:9 as the opening section which sets out the background to and theme of the Abraham narrative and patriarchal narratives as well. Since the some information of Abraham's identity and of the geographical location of his original homeland in Gen 12:1 were supplied in Gen 11:27-32, it seems unlikely that Gen 12:1-3 was ever an independent as an introduction to the Abraham narrative. Thus, the Abraham cycle is introduced by Gen 11:27-32.

This narrative scene, in turn, consists of four phases:[180]

THE PRELUDE (11:27-32)			
The prefatory superscription (11:27a)	Terah's segmented genealogy (11:27b-30)	Terah's migration (11:31)	Terah's obituary notice (11:32)

This section reflects an intimate knowledge of the subsequent story, in terms of dealing primarily with essential information for understanding the event in the Abraham narrative, which follows: characters; geographical information; and Sarah's barrenness.

1. Three chief characters, Abraham, Sarah, and Lot (vv. 27, 31) are introduced in the introduction. Lot is the subject of and his important role in chaps. 13-14, 18-19. Milcah's marriage to Nahor (v. 29), who is a grandmother of Rebekah (Gen 22:20, 23; 24:15, 24, 47) possibly foresees the episode of Isaac's

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[180] Westermann, *Genesis*, 96, views Gen 11:27-32 as a composite text comprised of both J and P sources (cf. Emerton's the source analysis of Gen 11:27-32: vv. 27 and 31-2 from P, and 28-30 from J, "The Source analysis of Genesis XI 27-32," *VT* 42 (1992): 37-46). He demarcates the text two parts: the genealogy (vv. 27b-30) and the itinerary (v. 31). This position, however, is untenable in some respects how Gen 11:27-32 divides with two different elements of both J and P.

    1. In the context of Genesis (esp. Gen 43:7; 48:6) and the parallelism from the other texts in OT (esp. Esth 8:6), the word מוֹלֶדֶת ('birthplace') signifies 'the circle of relatives, the family'. From this אֶרֶץ מוֹלֶדֶת connotes a single concept, 'the land in which the circle of relations dwells (i.e., native land). Once the man who wanders about from country to country leaves his homeland, he has no further connection with the former place. In this respect, Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 274-75, states "Hence, after the whole family of Terah had left Ur of the Chaldees (as the original home of Abraham) for Haran (as his native land), and all its ties with the former place were severed, the land of Haran could be referred to as 'the land of Abram's kindred' or 'his land and kindred'… ." Thus, it is no more than a hypothetical assumption that the two different geographical names reflect the diverse origin of texts.

    2. In the narrative context of Genesis, it should be noted that Gen 11:27-32 is intended to put the call of Abraham (Gen 12:1-3) within the setting of Ur of the Chaldeans in where Babylonian had dwelt (cf. Gen 15:7; Neh 9:7; Isa 13:19; 48:14; Jer 24:5; 25:12; 50:1, 8, 35, 45; 51:24, 54; Ezek 1:3; 12:13; 23:15, 23; Acts 7:2-3). In order words, the author/composer intends clearly to connect the call of Abraham and the dispersion of Babylon in Gen 11:1-9 (cf. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 137-39). Thus, the text emphasis on the geographical context of Ur of the Chaldeans rather than separates Abraham's religion from the pagan religion of his ancestors.

Opinion is even divided on the exegetical method of the text among the adherents of the documentary theory (cf. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 273).

matrimony to Rebekah in Genesis 24. The marriage report of Abraham and Nahor (v. 29) is inextricably linked to the following units concerning Isaac's marriage in Gen 22:20-24; 24:1-67 (cf. Emerton 1992:41-42), as well as setting up a genealogical structure that spans both the Abraham and Jacob sections (Gen 29:1-30).[181]

2. As already noted, the providing of the geographical context (Ur of the Chaldeans) suggests a significant view of the author's/composer's close attention to geography in working out his pivotal theme. By putting the call of Abraham (Gen 12:1-3) within the setting of Ur of the Chaldeans (Gen 15:7), not in Haran[182], the author/composer intends to draw a line connecting the call of Abraham with the dispersion of Babylon (Gen 11:1-9). In addition, the location of Haran's death "in the land of his kindred" (Gen 11:28) appears to provide background for the report of God's later command to Abraham to leave "land, kindred and the house of your father" (Gen 12:1).

3. The most important textual particularity in this episode is Sarah' barrenness (v. 30, cf. Genesis 15, 16, 17, 18), which will create the tension that will dominate

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[181] As N. Steinberg, "Alliance or Decent? The Function of Marriage in Genesis," *JSOT* 51 (1991): 51-53 and *Kinship and Marriage in Genesis: A Household Economics Perspective* (Mineapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 12-14, has particularly emphasized, the following transmission of the promise then occurs exclusively through these intermarriages within Terah's clan, between the lines of Abraham, on the one hand, and Nahor, on the other. Thus, the Jacob and Abraham sections are specifically linked not only by the Abraham-Isaac-Jacob genealogical sequence but also by a Nahor-Betuel-Laban sequence. As seen above, both Isaac (Gen 22:20-23; 24:1-67) and Jacob (Gen 29:1-30) marry descendants of Nahor. This emphasis on intermarriage within the clan is an important link between genealogy and promise, particularly the promise of the land. As Steinberg ("Alliance or Decent?, 49-53 and *Kinship and Marriage*, 26-34) points out, such emphasis on linear transmission of heirship through a limited family line is typical of cultures where inheritance of limited land resources is a major issue.
[182] However, here, one should not overlook the significance of the geographical role of Haran, where Abraham not only separates himself from the rest of his family, but he later sends in search of a wife for his son Isaac (Genesis 24).

the Abraham narrative. The barrenness of Sarah (אֵין לָהּ וָלָד)[183], the theme of Gen 12:10-20 Genesis 15-18, 20-21, 23 serves as an introduction to the narrative in view of anticipating the theme of the forthcoming stories, and achieves a certain emphasis through parallelism (Westermann 1987:96). In the other words, her infertility serves as a tension heightening element in a narrative that features a promise of a great nation (Gen 12:2) and the land (Gen 12:7).

In summary, each element of Gen 11:27-32 anticipates crucial elements of the rest of the Abraham narrative by manifesting certain specific themes that work themselves out in the following narratives. From this, this genealogical unit as the first introduction to the story of the patriarchs serves the narrative, both as a bridge from the previous cycle of episodes and setting the major ideas for the story that is to unfold. In other words, its purpose is to link them in retrospect with the primeval story and to outline in prospect the framework in which the narrative is to be played out. Dorsey (1999:54) appositely analyzes the structure of this section as follows:[184]

    A.   Introduction: Terah and his offspring (11:27)
        B.   The family lives in Ur of the Chaldeans (11:28)
            C.   Abram takes (וַיִּקַּח)[185] Terah's daughter Sarai as his wife (11:29)

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[183] A word is necessary here about the barrenness of Sarah in Gen 11:30. The adjective עֲקָרָה is usually translated "barren" in a context. However, it neither means that she can't become pregnant nor that is sterile. Rather it should be translated that she can't have children. Thus, Gen 11:30 probably would be translated that 'Sarah was unable to have children.' Having done this, to add, 'she had no children' would be redundant. The single sentence in English, thus, contains the meaning of the two sentences in Hebrew (cf. NIDOTTE 3:509-510; TWAT 6:343-346).

[184] This chiastic structure does provide a good basis for arguing against the Documentary Hypothesis that this narrative section (Gen 11:27-32) is not a later interpolation. However, this is not implying that this chiastic pattern does prove that the whole narrative was composed at one time by one author, that is, that no separate, prior sources existed. This structure provides a backdrop for the passage but may not be the only determining factor in the shaping of the text.

[185] The parallel occurrences of וַיִּקַּח, which indicates the authority of Terah (v. 31) and Abraham (Gen 12:5) in vv. 29 and 31 imply that Abraham has two allegiances, his wife and his father.

     D.   **Sarai's sterility (11:30)**

   C'.   Terah take (וַיִּקַּח) Abram, along with Abram's wife Sarai and Lot (11:31a)

  B'.   The family leaves Ur of the Chaldeans (11:31b)

A'.   Conclusion: summary of Terah's life; his death (11:32)

The palistrophic construction suggests that this section have a further significance, which means this section presents a clue to understand the following subsequent stories. As it were, these verses immediately underscore the problem of barrenness (Gen 11:30) that prepares the way for the main plot involving Abraham's seed (Alexander 1997:363-367; Scullion 1992a:102-105).[186] Then following hard upon this problem comes the promise of making of Abraham a great nation (Gen 12:1), and of the progenies and the land (Gen 12:7). In this sense, the barrenness sets up a tension between the divine promise and the problem of exercising faith in this promise because of Abraham's lack of an heir. This tension is dexterously and artistically maintained throughout the entire cycle (Gen 11:27-25:11) by a series of eight crises, which threaten to nullify the promise, interspersed with a sevenfold affirmation of the promise of an heir (cf. Helyer 1983:82-85).[187]

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[186] W. C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House & Academic Books, 1978), 35, 39-40, 84-99, discerns three primary aspects as the centrality of the promise to Abraham in Gen 12:1-3: an heir, an inheritance, and a heritage. The posterity out of these themes, in fact, is still at the center of its focus while it adds many new features in Genesis 12-50, especially Genesis 13, 15, 17, 22, 24, 26 and 28 (cf. Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch*, 29, 32-34). Indeed the Abraham narrative is dominated by this theme and more precisely with the question, Who will be Abraham's heir? (cf. C. Westermann, "Promises to the Patriarchs," in *The Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible*, Supplement Volume [Nashville: Abingdon, 1976], 690-93; *The Promises to the Father*, 56-73, 132-37, 165-77).

[187] Through a deep reading of the entire Abraham narrative, one may find a recurring theme, which threat to the divine promise in Gen 12:1-3 regarding a 'numerous seed,' 'blessing to all families of the earth,' 'or the 'gift of the land' can be traced throughout the Abraham narrative. The promise is placed in jeopardy by the actions of the characters of the narrative. For more discussion of threat to the heir, see, Helyer's work, "The Separation of Abram and Lot."

2.3.2.2. The main cycle (Gen 12:1-22:19)[188]

The main section, the heart of the narrative, in turn, is clearly framed by the two genealogies, namely, genealogy of Terah (Gen 11:27-32) and genealogy of Nahor (Gen 22:20-24) that act as a matching bookend for the narrative by the author/composer's literary mastery (cf. Rendsburg 1986:30).[189]

The prologue (11:27-32)	The main cycle (12:1-22:19)	The epilogue (23:1-25:11)

This main cycle is chiastically arranged, with the most corresponding subunits showing parallel internal arrangements. To put it concretely, numerous parallel themes, themes-words and the correspondences in verbal parallels,[190] which serve to establish nexuses

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[188] Waltke's scrutinizingly analysis into the main cycle can be taken an alternative reference to understand it. He (*Genesis*, 202-47) structurizes the main section with two acts (i.e., act 1, Gen 12:1-15:21 and act 2, Gen 16:1-22:19). The first act consists of the five scenes as follows:
1. The call of Abraham and Abraham's migration to the promised land (Gen 12:1-9)
2. Deliverance from Egypt (Gen 12:10-13:2)
3. Separation of Lot from the land of promise (Gen 13:3-18)
4. Victory over eastern kings (Gen 14:1-24)
5. God's covenant with Abraham (Gen 15:1-21)

The second act, which can be divided into eight scenes, is dominantly relevant by the promise of progeny, scarcely stating land. The eight scenes can be sketched as follows:
1. Hagar and Ishmael rejected (Gen 16:1-16)
2. God's covenant to bless nations through Abraham's and Sarah's seed (Gen 17:1-27)
3. The visitation of the Lord and His angels: Abraham as prophet (Gen 18:1-33)
4. Judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:1-38)
5. Matriarch and patriarch delivered from Philistia (Gen 20:1-18)
6. Isaac's birth and blessings in land (Gen 21:1-21)
7. Covenant with Abimelech (Gen 21:22-34)
8. Sacrifice of Isaac and God's Oath (Gen 22:1-19)

Regarding W. Vosloo, From Haran to Goshen, in *From Eden to Rome*, eds. F. Deist & W. Vosloo & E. Pretorius & I. de Plessis (Pretoria: van Schaik, 1982), 15-17, suggests the four groups of narratives concerning the composition of the Abraham narrative: narratives about the promised land (Genesis 12-14), the promises (Genesis 15-17), the judgment (Genesis 18-19), and the offspring (Genesis 20-24). However, as below mentioned, it is not always easy to determine exactly what kind of theme does each of the episodes in the Abraham narrative has, according to the themes, for the entire complex is thematically intertwined regarding heir, land and blessing.

[189] These inclusive genealogies fill out the collateral lines of Abraham's family, the descendants of his two brothers: Lot, son of Abraham's brother Haran, who died before the family left Ur of the Chaldeans (Gen 11:27-32), and the descendants of his remaining brother, Nahor (Gen 22:20-24).

[190] The textual parallelism between the episodes in this section will be explored in more detail in subsequent chapters.

with the intervening material, reflect the literary texture of this narrative section. The chiastic structuring of the whole narrative of the main section thus is undeniable. Evidence for chiasmus in this text is strong. The main section can be precisely divided by the most eight corresponding subunits as follows:[191]

Terah's Genealogy (11:27-32)

  A. YHWH's commands and promises – offspring and land (12:1-9)

    B. Threats to the promise of heir in Egypt: Abraham separation from Lot (12:10-13:18)

      C. Abraham intercedes for Sodom and Lot militarily (14:1-24)

        D. Covenant with Abraham: the promise of posterity and land (15:1-16:16)

        D'.Covenant with Abraham: the promise of posterity and land (17:1-18:15)

      C'.Abraham intercedes for Sodom and Lot spiritually (18:16-19:38)

    B'.Threats to the promise of heir in Gerar: Abraham separation from Ishmael (20:1-21:34)

  A'.YHWH's commands and promises: offspring and land (22:1-19)

Nahor's Genealogy (22:20-24)[192]

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[191] This underlying structural analysis basically observes and accepts Rendsburg's chiastic structure, which was expanded Cassuto's chiastic arrangement of ten trials or ordeals that Abraham undergoes (cf. Rendsburg, *Redaction of Genesis*, 28-29), and is partly debt to Sutherland ("The Organization of the Abraham Promise Narrative," 333-43) as well. This study, however, has made some changes in Sutherland's presentation. In a later work, Waltke (*Genesis*, 20) analyzed the structure of the passage in a similar but not identical fashion. For other chiastic arrangements of the Abraham cycle, see Kikawada and Quinn, *Before Abraham Was*, 96.

[192] This genealogy can be structurally divided into two subunits: the first pertaining to the eight sons by Milcah, Nahor's lawful wife (Gen 22:20-23) and the second the four sons by his concubine Reumah (Gen 22:24). From this, the twelve nonelect sons of Nahor parallel the twelve elect sons of Abraham through Jacob, and match the twelve sons of Ishmael (Gen 17:20; Gen 25:12-16). Commonly, source critics attribute this narrative to J source because of no bearing the linguistic features normally cited as P (instead of the use of the qal ℿℓℿ) and clearly anticipating the Yahwist's account in Genesis 24 (for example, the mention of Rebekah in v. 23) (see, G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, WBC [Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1994], 119). From a literary point of view, this genealogy, however, is exquisitely incorporated in the present narrative arrangement. Two observations will be demonstrated concerning the textual constitution. Firstly, it as a buffer between two Gen 22:1-19 and Genesis 23 functions to separate the narrative of Abraham's test (Gen 22:1-19) in the triumphant ambiance (esp. in Gen 22:16-18) from the story of Sarah's death (Gen 23:1-20) in the solemn atmosphere. Secondly, this section provides the backdrop of the following episodes which means that sets the stage for the introduction both of the marriage of Isaac to Rebekah (Gen 24:1-67; Gen 25:20) into the family line of the patriarchs and of Jacob to Leah and Rachel (Gen 28:5) by establishing the union of Isaac and Rebekah who parent Jacob and his brother (Gen 25:21-26). Therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude that the central purpose of this narrative is to introduce the source of the future bride of Isaac, Rebekah (v. 23) and to show that she was of the lineage of Milcah and not of her concubine (ℿℿℓℿ≺). As it were, the motif of marriage and offspring so essential to the thematic thread of the whole links Gen 11:29 and Gen 22:20-24 and Genesis 24, making it unnecessary to view Genesis 24 as a supplement (cf. Emerton, "The Source analysis of Genesis," 41-42 and also Car's view, Reading the Fractures of Genesis, 110,

As noted in the structural arrangement, the main cycle as a whole is a concentric pattern, which symmetrically arranged, with corresponding episodes showing parallel internal arrangements (cf. Kikawada & Quinn 1987:95).[193] Each of subunits in the cycle is unified by the theme of the promises of land and progeny and the series of peril that threaten its fulfillment. The two genealogies pertaining to Abraham's familial connection, Terah and Nahor dynamically function as the matching bookends. In other words, the genealogies structurally form inclusio in the narrative framework.[194]

This artistically literary feature reveals a texture of contrast and intensification when comparing the corresponding subunits, especially when combining with A, Abraham's geographically separation from his father, and with A', Abraham's intention to kill his son, that is, his hope of the promised heir. These two events must be read with both in mind for the reason that they are the occasion on which God speaks to Abraham (twice) about the divine blessing (Gen 12:1-3, the opening blessing and Gen 22:16-18, the closing blessing), the promise of an heir and the reference to a settlement in the land.[195]

198-99, relying in part on Emerton's). In these respects, the genealogy of Nahor as an interlude is a transitions Abraham's story to the Jacob narrative (Gen 25:19-35:29) in providing information the narrative requires in order to ensure the reader that the promises were passed down to Isaac as required.

[193] Detailed textual relationship between subunits of the main section will be presented in chapter 3.

[194] Several reasons may be suggested as to why these genealogies form an inclusio around the main section concerning Abraham (Gen 12:1-22:19). Firstly, as in the opening episode (Gen 11:27-31) to the cycle, so also in the closing episode (Gen 22:20-24), Milcah and Sarah are mentioned in close proximity. Secondly, the genealogy of Nahor echoes the genealogy of Terah (Gen 11:27-31). Thirdly, as the epilogue to the entire Abraham narrative, it corresponds to the genealogical prologue (Gen 11:27-31) that previews the three family lines of Terah (Gen 11:27-29), as the genealogy of Nahor reestablishes the identity of the Terah ancestry under the תולדות of Terah in Gen 11:27 (Thompson, *The Origin Tradition of Ancient Israel*, 99). Finally, the Nahor's genealogy completes the details of the descendants of his and Milcah (Gen 11:29). For all these parallelisms, von Rad (*Genesis*, 240) simply sees the genealogy of Nahor (Gen 22:20-24) as 'an incorporated artless Aramean genealogy into the biographical context of the narrative.' These parallels, however, show that the author/the final composer of these narratives composed according to a coherent compositional scheme.

[195] The two passages, Gen 12:1-9 and Gen 22:1-19 can be tied by the odd phrase לֶךְ־לְךָ, which has an alternating repetition of consonants, כ-ל-כ-ל, whose forward symmetry strengthens the force of the

Subunits B and B' where there is more strongly dynamic intensification each than previous subunits comprise three smaller corresponding sections[196]: Sarah's peril in the foreign harems (B$_1$, Gen 12:10-20 and B$_2$', Gen 20:1-18), termination of ordeals in peace and success (B$_1$, Gen 13:1-4 and B$_2$', Gen 21:22-34), and Abraham's separation from Lot and Ishmael (Gen 13:5-18[197] and Gen 21:1-21).[198] Here it should be noted that whereas the textual order in Gen 12:10-13-18 is B$_1$, B$_2$, B$_3$, the order in Gen 20:1-21:34 is B'$_1$, B'$_2$, B'$_3$, which means the textual arrangement between Gen 21:1-21 and Gen 21:22-34 were reversed. In this regard, Rendsburg (1986:38-39) provides twofold answers and clues for the reason. To begin with, the author/the final composer created a juxtaposition between Gen 20:17-18, where God heals Abimelech, his wife, and the maidservants of the household, so they could have children for having taken Sarah, and Gen 21:1-2, where Isaac was born, by placing the discourse of Ishmael's parting before the account of Abraham's achievement. Secondly, by interposing the story of Abraham's success, the author/the final composer "allowed for the passage of tie

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imperative verb לֶךְ, Go!) and of the whole phrase (cf. Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, 160-61; B. Jacob, *Das erste Buch der Tora: Genesis* [Berlin: Schocken, 1934], 493). It is extremely rare in the Old Testament, occurring elsewhere only once, Genesis 22, where again Yahweh is speaking to Abraham.

[196] To be sure, nothing in the episode B (Gen 12:10-13:18) corresponds to the birth of Isaac (Gen 21:1-7). This case is an asymmetry as 'unmatched subunit'. Here it is necessary to observe asymmetry. Asymmetry, which can be one of the most forceful stylistic devices in biblical Hebrew, is a deviation within an otherwise clear symmetry. Three types of asymmetry can be schematized: 1) '**unmatched subunit**' (AB+CDD'C'B'A' or ABCDD'C'B'+A'). This occurs when a subunit in one sequence lacks a corresponding subunit in the other. Thus '+' is the extra subunit which may be in either sequence, and it may occur in forward or reverse patterns. However, '+' material might be considered part of the 'B' subunit that precede it; 2) '**non-correspondence**' (AB**X**CDD'C'**Y**B'A'). This pattern involves lack of correspondence in two subunits that occupy corresponding positions in the pattern. In this case 'X' and 'Y' correspond in position but share no common elements; and 3) '**Transposition**' (ABCDEFF'E'D'C'**A'B'**). This form of asymmetry occurs where the order of subunits in one sequence does not correspond exactly to that of the other. For more discussion on asymmetry, for detailed discussion, see Walsh (*Style and Structure*, 101-18).

[197] In fact, one may have Gen 13:14-18 as another small corresponding section in the passage, which parallels with Gen 21:22-34 concerning the honor of Yahweh.

[198] For a fuller discussion of the textual analysis see, Cassuto (*A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, II. 291-300) and Sarna (*Understanding Genesis*, 161). These three smaller sections were quoted by Rendsburg (*Redaction of Genesis*, 35-39).

between Isaac the infant (Gen 21:1-21) and Isaac the grown lad."

In both subunits C and C' comparison reveals both contrast and intensification, which means that both episodes are indubitably analogous, though in this case the contrast is stronger. This is reflected in the reverse order of the corresponding subunits $(C_1C_2C_3/C'_3C'_2C'_1)$. To drive home this point one may sketch a chart as follow:

Abraham militarily intercedes with God for Sodom and Lot (14:1-24)		Abraham spiritually intercedes with God for Sodom and Lot (18:16-19:38)
D_1. 14:1-12	Nations at war in the Valley of the Salt Sea	D'_1. 19:29-38
D_2. 14:13-16	Abraham rescues Lot and tries to save Sodom	D'_2. 19:1-28
D_3. 14:17-24	Melchizedek blesses Abraham; Abraham refuses a tenth of Sodom's goods. Abraham challenges God; God agrees to spare righteous in Sodom.	D'_3. 18:16-33

Finally, the two parallel subunits D and D', which describes the covenant established between God and Abraham, and the annunciation of a son in fulfillment of that covenant, likewise involve both intensification and contrast. The sections consist of two subsections, namely the covenant portions[199] (D_1, Gen 15:1-20; D'_1, Gen 17:1-27) and the annunciation scenes (D_2, Gen 16:1-16; D'_2, Gen 18:1-15). The two covenants are both followed by annunciation scenes. YHWH makes a covenant with Abraham

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[199] For the peculiar comment on the difference of the two covenant narrations, see Von Rad (*Genesis*, 177, 192-93) and Speiser (*Genesis*, 126). However, the "several theme-words shared by the two chapters" and "more importantly the exact order of action, ideas, and motifs" in the two subunits (Gen 15:1-21 and Gen 17:1-27) are datum adequate to contravene their arguments, though there are some differences "in the names of the deity, the names of the patriarch, the ritual utilized" (Rendsburg, *Redaction of Genesis*, 41-45; cf. Davidson, *Genesis 1-11, 12-50*, 54-56).

(Gen 15:1-20; 17:1-27). The second covenant with the patriarch is more specific than the first: in E, Abraham is promised an heir who will be his own offspring; in D', he is promised an heir by Sarah, one from whom will descend "nations and kings of peoples" (Gen 17:16). Contrast is found between the two birth annunciations (Gen 16:1-16; 18:1-15). In the context of the promise Ishmael's birth seems to fulfill promises made in Genesis 15, but the ensuing angelic visitation to Hagar makes it clear that Ishmael, though his destiny will be great (Gen 16:10), is not the expected heir (Gen 16:12). The second annunciation (D'$_2$), though it names Isaac only by allusion[200], assures Abraham that this will be the long-awaited child of the promise. Accordingly, it is discernible that the cycle bears the stamp of having been intentionally shaped to parallel each subunit in this section.[201]

2.3.2.3. The epilogue (Gen 23:1-25:11)[202]

The prologue (11:27-32)	The main cycle (12:1-22:19)	The epilogue (23:1-25:11)

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[200] Sarah's laughter (▯▯↕, four times in Gen 18:12-15) is part of series of punning allusions to Isaac's name ▯▯↕▯. See also Gen 21:6; Gen 26:8.

[201] As astutely noted by Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, II. 277, 296-97; see also Jacob, *Das erste Buch der* Tora, 493; Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, 160-61; Davidson, *Genesis 1-11, 12-50*, 94; S. R. Driver, *The Book of Genesis*, Westminster Commentaries (London: Methuen, 1905), 146; Speiser, *Genesis*, 86. Rendsburg, *Redaction of Genesis*, 29-52. Sarna shrewdly presents the eight parallels and theme-words shared by Gen 12:1-9 and 22:1-19. See, also Rendsburg, *Redaction of Genesis*, 32-33.

[202] Some scholars regard Genesis 22 as the end of the Abraham cycle and as the climax. See, Davidson, *Genesis 1-11, 12-50*, 98; Rendsburg, *Redaction of Genesis*, 50-51; Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, 166. They posit that the material, which comprises Gen 23:1-25:11 are merely used to link between the Abraham cycle and the Jacob cycle. Meanwhile, Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 366-67, proposed that the Abraham narrative began with the genealogy of Gen 11:27-32 and closed out with Gen 21:1-7 (birth of Isaac) followed by the genealogies in Gen 22:20-24 and Gen 25:1-18, listing the children born by Milcah and Sarah (Gen 11:29) as well as their concubines to Nahor and Abraham. Gen 21:8-24:67, excepting Gen 22:20-24, supplements the original narrative (cf. Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition*, 248). We have addressed already as to why we can't admit the unfounded claims concerning the narratives arrangement.

As noted above the section as a concluding transition to the next units falls into three scenes based on content: scenes of purchasing burial site for Sarah's death (Genesis 23)[203], the scene of securing a bride for Isaac and his marriage (Genesis 24)[204] and scenes of Abraham's death and burial (Gen 25:1-11).[205] These narratives can be arranged in a conspicuous symmetry with the structurally highlighted central, the episode featuring God's gracious and sovereign selection of the chosen couple with an emphasis on the wife: The divine election of Rebekah, Isaac's wife is bracketed by the death of their parents who divinely selected as well:
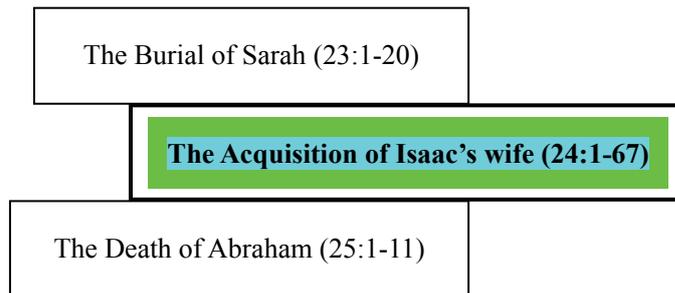
> A. The genealogy of Nahor: non-chosen family (22:20-24)
> B. The death of Sarah (23:1-20)
> **C. The divine election of Rebekah as a matriarch (24:1-67)**
> B'. The death of Abraham (25:1-11)
> A'. The genealogy of Ishmael: non-chosen family (25:12-18)

The divine election of Rebekah, Isaac's wife is bracketed by the death of their parents who divinely selected as well:

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[203] This narrative has a bearing on the divine promise of land in purchasing a particular piece of land, which is a suitable burial place for Abraham's family. The account of acquiring possession of the cave at Machpelah from Ephron the Hittite provides a link with three major patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in terms of entombed all at same burial place (Gen 25:9-10; 35:27-29; 49:29-50:14; cf. Gen 50:24-26). For this reason, this narrative not merely is a kernel story for Genesis 23, but centers round prominently in subsequent patriarchal narratives.

[204] In its present form one maybe find some allusions to the preceding sections in the Abraham cycle: 1) the reference to the village of Nahor in Gen 24:10 echoes Gen 11:27 or Gen 22:20; 2) the possession of Abraham described by the servant resembles Gen 12:16 or Gen 13:12; 3) Gen 24:36 alludes to the birth of Isaac recorded in Gen chap. 21; 4) the blessing of Rebekah in Gen 24:60 bears a remarkable resemblance to part of the divine oath in 22:17; and 5) Gen 24:67 assumes a knowledge of the death of Sarah (Genesis 23). Of all the connections, which exist between Genesis 24 and earlier sections of the Abraham narrative, perhaps the most significant is the link with the part of Gen 11:27-12:9 in terms of accomplishing the blessing in Gen 12:1-3 and Gen 24:1 (cf. Gen 24:35-36). Moreover, the reference to the call of Rebekah to leave her country and family bears a remarkable resemblance to part of that of Abraham (W. M. W. Roth, "The Wooing of Rebekah. A Tradition-critical Study of Genesis 24," *CBQ* 34 [1972], 178-179). Evidently, Genesis 24 highlights the fact that Abraham has prospered because of his obedience to God's call to leave his family and homeland. In its present form Genesis 24 is clearly familiar with many of the incidents, which occur earlier in the life of Abraham.

[205] The narrative provides a natural conclusion to the Abraham cycle with Abraham's death. Yet it not merely concludes the Abraham narrative, but also anticipates later developments involving Isaac and his sons, Jacob and Esau in verse 5 and verse 11 (cf. Davidson, *Genesis 1-11, 12-50*, 261).

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│  The Burial of Sarah (23:1-20)       │
│    ┌──────────────────────────────────────┐
│    │  **The Acquisition of Isaac's wife (24:1-67)** │
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│  The Death of Abraham (25:1-11)  │
└──────────────────────────────────┘
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In this narrative structure, the author/the final composer wants to show that one of the major concerns in the Abraham narrative relates how a wife is acquired for Isaac by Yahweh's sovereign determination. Since "without the marriage of Isaac the promises of numerous descendants and nationhood would remain unfulfilled. Thus, Genesis 24 forms an important bridge between the Abraham cycle and the subsequent Jacob cycle" (Alexander 1982:64).

2.4. Conclusion

As we have examined the unity and structure of the Abraham cycle, the first half of the narrative consist of five units in Gen 11:27-16:16, which are then duplicated by the latter half of the narrative, which composes another five units in reverse order in Gen 17:1-22:24. This composition forms the symmetric structure of the narrative helps explain much of the repetition and positioning of episodes. From this, it is apparent that the latter episodes frequently assume a knowledge of narrative events which occur earlier in the cycle, and earlier episodes often anticipate later developments in the story. Certain episodes thus are directly dependent upon others, which mean that the individual units can only be properly understood in the light of the narrative or narratives upon which it is dependent.

Accordingly, these observations of the structure of the Abraham narrative reveal that the narrative is not a loose collection of stories brought together in a more or less haphazard or ad hoc fashion as scholars have viewed it. Rather, in its present form it shows all the signs of being an intentionally constructed and closely integrated narrative. As a result, if we have correctly investigated the unity and structure of the Abraham cycle, then we may say that its primary purpose is to draw attention to the divine promised regarding land and seed, which are intended meaning within the entire cycle. These two pivotal themes particularly underlie the main section of the cycle (Gen 11:27-22:19). The implication of this present chapter for the literary materials of the Abraham narrative will be argued more fully in the next chapter.