

42:22, and 42:37). Judah, by contrast emerges as a hero in chap. 44 where in his speech before Joseph (the longest speech in the story) he rises to the heroic heights of volunteering to stay a slave in place of Benjamin -- a speech which finally convinced Joseph of the moral transformation of his brothers and led to his revealing himself to them. The story, therefore, represents Reuben as slipping and Judah as rising to the position of preeminence that should have belonged to the first born. Is it any wonder then, that chap. 38 is devoted entirely to Judah, his liaison with Tamar, and the birth of the two twin boys which were his heirs?

Seen in this light, the Reuben passages and the Judah passages are required by the macrostructure of the story which would not be completed or meaningful (in the light of chap. 49) if they were not *both* there. What need, therefore, is there to suppose that the former, the Reuben passages, reflect a source (E) that is distinct from that of the Judah passages (J)? One explanation, if satisfactory, is all that is needed to explain a set of phenomena; if the explanation is satisfactory, further explanation becomes superfluous. If, therefore, by the normal devices of the storyteller a sub-plot (Reuben versus Judah) is worked into our story in a way that explains one of the major emphases of the story, what need is there for resort to source criticism? We are a bit ahead of our argument, however, for we still have Jacob versus Israel and the Midianites versus the Ishmaelites to consider.

The Recursive Constituent Nature of Text

I pause here briefly to consider the typically recursive nature of text in general and narrative text in particular. Discourses are certainly not simple unilinear sequences of sentences; we cannot with any great meaning or relevance report that a given text is a sequence of, say, 946 sentences. Rather the sentences clump and cluster together in all sorts of ways. To begin with sentences cluster into paragraphs, with simpler paragraphs clustering into more complex paragraph units. Paragraphs in turn cluster into embedded discourses which compose the main discourse. Thus, in regard to narratives, story within story, sub-plot within plot is the order of the day. In a story of any great complexity, the main episodes of the story characteristically are themselves stories with their own narrative structures.⁹

What does this have to do with the structure of the Joseph story and the problem that we here address within that story? First of all, it is helpful to recognize the embedded narratives within Joseph: Joseph sold into Egypt (chap. 37); Joseph's rise in Potiphar's house (39:1-6); Joseph's ruin through sexual harassment on the job (39:7-23); Joseph's interpreting the dreams of two imprisoned courtiers (40); Pharaoh's dreams and Joseph's rise to power (41); the brothers' first trip to Egypt to buy grain (42); the second trip, Judah's speech, and Joseph's revelation of himself (43-45); the coming of Jacob and all his clan to Egypt where Jacob and Joseph are reunited (46:13-27); Jacob's blessing Ephraim and Manasseh, Joseph's