

## CHAPTER 1 A SURVEY OF BIBLICAL FOLKLORE SCHOLARSHIP AND THE SAMSON SAGA

This study presents a comparative analysis of three ancient Near Eastern tales in order to illuminate the biblical tale of Samson and Delilah in Judg 16. The tales selected contain expressions of Stith Thompson's K2111 motif, also known as the "Potiphar's Wife Motif." This comparative study explores the ANE expression of the motif and argues that the motif is more accurately described as the "Hero and His Temptress Motif." This study is situated at the broad intersection between folklore studies and biblical studies. Thus, it is pertinent to first explore how these two fields of study intersect and the major research trends therewithin.

### **Early Biblical Folklore Scholarship**

The study of folk literature is a broad field that intersects with many other fields of study like anthropology, sociology, psychology, and biblical studies. Sir James George Frazer was one of the early, important scholars to recognize a relationship between biblical literature and folk literature. His work, originally published in 1918 in three volumes, assessed the Pentateuch and historical books in light of various folk literature motifs. Frazer perceived folklore to be literature that reflects the traditional beliefs and customs

of the culture that has collected and preserved them.<sup>1</sup> Like most early folklore scholars who were influenced by scientific evolutionary theory, Frazer believed that folklore developed in an early stage of a culture's evolution; a stage that is often associated with barbarism, savagery, or "a lower level of culture."<sup>2</sup> Frazer utilized a comparative method to trace the intellectual and mental evolution of a particular people group.<sup>3</sup> By comparing the biblical text to other known folktales, Frazer identified the relics of an earlier Israelite culture preserved within the biblical text. The field of folklore studies has come a long way from Frazer's view that folk literature arises from barbaric, primitive cultures; however, his application of folklore to biblical literature sparked a new field of inquiry to which many scholars have dedicated their careers.

Hermann Gunkel has also had a profound impact upon the scholarly interest in folklore and biblical literature. His work was originally published in German in 1917 but was not translated into English until much later.<sup>4</sup> Like Frazer, Gunkel also took a comparative approach in order to identify folktale motifs that occur in the Hebrew Bible. Gunkel defined folktales, along with myths, sagas, and legends, as "poetical stories."<sup>5</sup> Gunkel stated that historiography is a learned literary genre but poetical stories are an

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<sup>1</sup> James George Frazer, *Folk-Lore in the Old Testament: Studies in Comparative Religion, Legend, and Law* (London: Macmillan, 1923), ix.

<sup>2</sup> Frazer, *Folk-Lore*, ix.

<sup>3</sup> Frazer, *Folk-Lore*, ix.

<sup>4</sup> Hermann Gunkel, *The Folktale in the Old Testament*, trans. Michael D. Rutter (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1987).

<sup>5</sup> Gunkel, *The Folktale*, 21.

innate genre, thereby making them the normative form of literature. Poetical stories tell the types of tales that audiences enjoy hearing by combining facts with constructs of the imagination.<sup>6</sup> Since folktales, as a form of poetical story, originate in the author's imagination, Gunkel concludes there are no folktales in the Bible. He does however recognize that the writers and readers of the Bible were familiar with the cultural folktales of their time; thus, he suggests that biblical literature preserves some of the motifs from these popular folktales.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, Gunkel examines the various folktale-like material that is present in the biblical text. Gunkel utilizes one of two criteria when selecting material for analysis: either the folktale quality of the literature is obvious, or it resembles parallel material from other folk literature.<sup>8</sup>

Gunkel and Frazer were both exploring the connection between the Bible and folk literature at a time when comparative methodology was on the rise. However, in light of Friedrich Delitzsch and the *Babel und Bibel* debate, comparative approaches moved away from the forefront of biblical scholarship for a period of time. It was not until the works of William Albright, Frank Moore Cross, and more recently William Hallo, that the comparative method experienced a resurgence in biblical scholarship.<sup>9</sup> Many of the more

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<sup>6</sup> Gunkel, *The Folktale*, 22.

<sup>7</sup> Gunkel, *The Folktale*, 33.

<sup>8</sup> Gunkel, *The Folktale*, 35.

<sup>9</sup> William W. Hallo, "Compare and Contrast: The Contextual Approach to Biblical Literature," in *The Bible in Light of Cuneiform Literature: Scripture in Context III*, ed. William W. Hallo, Bruce William Jones, and Gerald L. Mattingly, Ancient Near Eastern Texts and Studies 8 (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1990), 1–30; Brent A. Strawn, "Comparative Approaches: History, Theory, and Image of God," in *Method Matters: Essays on the Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Honor of David L. Petersen*, ed. Joel M. LeMon and Kent Harold Richards, Resources for Biblical Study 56 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 117–42.

recent studies addressing folklore in the Bible rely upon a foundation in the comparative method while also applying other folklore methodologies.

### **Development of Folklore Scholarship**

Folklore scholarship contains a plethora of studies with various goals and methods; however, most folklore scholarship can be categorized into one of three major foci: descriptive studies, transmission studies, and functional studies. Descriptive studies seek to understand the form of a specific piece of folk literature and then classify that tale among other like types.<sup>10</sup> Transmission studies are concerned with the methods of folktale composition and transmission, placing a strong emphasis on the oral nature of folk literature. Lastly, functional studies examine how a particular tale is used in its context and the interpretation that the context brings to the tale regardless of its origin.<sup>11</sup> These varied research goals may influence how an individual scholar defines folklore since there is no agreed upon standard definition, as attested in the twenty-one different entries for folklore in *Funk and Wagnall's Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend*.<sup>12</sup> Despite a perceived lack of uniformity in the way in which folklore is defined, most definitions make reference to the means by which the tale has been transmitted and a traditional element that is present in the tale.

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<sup>10</sup> Susan Niditch, *Underdogs and Tricksters: A Prelude to Biblical Folklore* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 1.

<sup>11</sup> Niditch, *Underdogs and Tricksters*, 1.

<sup>12</sup> Maria Leach and Jerome Fried, eds., *Funk & Wagnalls' Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend*, 2 vols. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1949), 1:398–403.

Many biblical scholars who utilize folklore methodologies are influenced by descriptive studies; this is due in part to the works of Frazer and Gunkel, which are concerned with identifying folktale features in the Bible and comparing them to other traditions. Descriptive folklore scholarship has been influenced profoundly by the work of the brothers Grimm. The brothers Grimm collected an array of European folktales and in that process they identified three main categories of prose narrative: myth (*Mythus*), legend (*Sage*), and folktale (*Märchen*).<sup>13</sup> However, the definitions that the brothers Grimm provided for these three genre categories are vague at best, leaving subsequent folklorists alone in the dark forest with wolves and evil step-mothers.

A more detailed example of descriptive study is found in the work of Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson. These two scholars have produced catalogs of various folklore types and motifs. The catalog of folklore types was originally produced by Aarne and was later translated and expanded by Thompson.<sup>14</sup> Aarne's classification system deals with mostly European folktales and categorizes the various character and story types that are repeated in those folktales. Thompson later produced his own *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*, which is more comprehensive than Aarne's work.<sup>15</sup> Thompson's six volume motif-index attempts to categorize the common material found in the folk-literature of the world. To

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<sup>13</sup> Patricia G. Kirkpatrick, *The Old Testament and Folklore Study*, JSOTSup 62 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1988), 76. These three categories of narrative are reflected in the brothers Grimm's three major publications of folk narrative collections titled; *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, *Deutsche Sagen*, and *Deutsche Mythologie*.

<sup>14</sup> Antti Aarne, *The Types of the Folktale: A Classification and Bibliography*, trans. Stith Thompson, 2nd ed., FFC 184 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1961), 4–9.

<sup>15</sup> Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature: A Classification of Narrative Elements in Folktales, Ballads, Myths, Fables, Mediaeval Romances, Exempla, Fabliaux, Jest-Books, and Local Legends*, 6 vols. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955).

conduct an international categorization, Thompson utilizes the motif, defined as “the smallest element in a tale having the power to persist in tradition,” as his point of comparison.<sup>16</sup> Upon identifying which motifs are present in a tale, Thompson categorizes them within his letter and number system. The motifs are divided into broad categories labelled with a letter A–Z; for example, motifs under B deal with animals, those under D deal with magic, and category K contains motifs of deception. Within each of these letter categories the motifs are then further differentiated with a numbering system; for example, D0–699 are magic motifs dealing with transformation and K2100–2199 are deception motifs dealing with false accusations.<sup>17</sup> For each specific motif, Thompson names the motif and lists various example stories which demonstrate the motif. This allows a researcher to examine each of those folktales individually in order to fully understand the unique features of each motif.

Thompson’s motif-index is modeled upon the scientific classification of biological phenomena. Akin to the scientific categorization of biological material into species, Thompson seeks to categorize literature into various motifs.<sup>18</sup> However, there are some shortcomings with his categorization system. Although Thompson identifies the motif as the smallest element of a tale, there is much subjectivity in determining what is and is not a motif. Some motifs are described as plot elements or actions taken within a story, like death or injury by magic (motif D2060); while other motifs are simply

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<sup>16</sup> Stith Thompson, *The Folktale* (New York: Dryden, 1946), 415; Thompson, *Motif-Index*, 1:10, 19.

<sup>17</sup> Thompson, *Motif-Index*, 1:29–35.

<sup>18</sup> Thompson, *Motif-Index*, 1:10.

characteristics of the actor, like magic strength that resides in one's hair (motif D1831). As a result, most stories contain multiple motifs, which makes them difficult to categorize based upon Thompson's classification system. Thompson is also concerned with the universality of motifs and includes literature from around the world, often comparing literature steaming from two unrelated cultures or unrelated time periods. Although some motifs may have universal themes, others may be limited to a particular culture; therefore, a localized approach should be utilized to first assess the features of the motif before moving to a universal comparison.<sup>19</sup> The motif-index continues to prove beneficial as a resource and starting place for many researchers interested in descriptive folklore studies; however, its limitations must be taken into consideration.

Other descriptive approaches to folklore are less concerned with categorizing motifs and more concerned with identifying the structure of folktales. Two examples of such approaches are found in the work of Vladimir Propp and Claude Lévi-Strauss. Both of these scholars are concerned with the various elements of which a folktale is comprised and the relationships between those various elements. Propp's work focuses on the narrative level of the tale while that of Lévi-Strauss is concerned with deeper paradigmatic relationships within folk literature. However, each of these scholars has had a wide influence upon subsequent research in both folklore studies and biblical studies.

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<sup>19</sup> Alan Dundes, "Structuralism and Folklore," in *Meaning of Folklore: The Analytical Essays of Alan Dundes*, ed. Simon J. Bronner (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 2007), 123–53; Strawn, "Comparative Approaches," 128–29; Shemaryahu Talmon, "The 'Comparative Method' in Biblical Interpretation – Principles and Problems," in *Congress Volume Göttingen, 1977*, ed. Walther Zimmerli, VTSupp 29 (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 320–56. Strawn's discussion of comparative studies notes that there are times in which cross-cultural comparisons are preferred. However, he does mention that these comparisons should consider both what is similar and what is different about the texts in question. Thompson's motif-index provides no assessment of the motif, it simply lists tales that contain the motif leaving it up to the subsequent interpreters to determine how alike or different the individual tales are.

In *Morphology of the Folktale*, Vladimir Propp applies a formalist method to the structural analysis of Russian fairytales.<sup>20</sup> Like Thompson, Propp's ultimate goal is to be able to classify folktales and, like in science, the first step to correct classification is correct description.<sup>21</sup> In a critique of Aarne's classification system, Propp indicates that a classification system should not be built upon plot since plots are often interwoven, making their separation difficult. Therefore, Propp focuses his analysis on the dramatis personae and the function of their actions in the tale. The focus is upon the function not the action itself because two individuals may behave differently but their differing behavior can still serve the same function within the story. Thus, a function is determined by the action and is bound to its place in the process of narration.<sup>22</sup> Propp surveyed hundreds of Russian fairytales and concluded that for these tales there is a set number of potential functions that could occur within the tale and those functions tend to occur in a particular order. Overall, Propp's work seeks to decompose the fairytale into its component parts in order to allow for better classification and comparison of tales.

Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* has had a lasting effect on both folklore studies and biblical studies as many scholars have applied his methodology to other forms of folk literature. In biblical studies, Propp's approach is utilized to describe the structure of biblical narratives. This structural model can provide biblical scholars with a

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<sup>20</sup> Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, ed. Louis A. Wagner, 2nd ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968), vi.

<sup>21</sup> Propp, *Morphology*, 4–5.

<sup>22</sup> Propp, *Morphology*, 18–19.

new perspective apart from form criticism.<sup>23</sup> Although form criticism is concerned with narrative forms, it is much more focused upon the *Sitz im Leben* in which the text was generated. Propp's formalist model is only concerned with the narrative form of the tale. Although Propp's model has much to offer, it is not without its limitations. The model was developed on one specific genre of literature, namely, the Russian fairytale. Therefore, a direct application of Propp's method can only determine if the literature in question fits the Russian fairytale model or not.<sup>24</sup> Scholars who utilize Propp's method must be aware of these limitations and must set out a clear purpose for the use of Propp's method of analysis.

The work of the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss is similar to Propp's formalist approach. Although Lévi-Strauss considers his work to be a structuralist approach, which is different than the formalist method, both Propp and Lévi-Strauss build upon a foundation rooted in the work of linguist Ferdinand de Saussure.<sup>25</sup> Propp and Lévi-Strauss take Saussure's fundamental idea, that language can be decomposed into structurally related, concrete units, and they apply it to narrative texts. Saussure likens language to a chess game since it is the combination of different pieces or units in opposition, based upon the rules of the system, that defines meaning.<sup>26</sup> Thus, Saussure's linguistic approach is focused upon identifying the constituent units of a language and the

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<sup>23</sup> Pamela J. Milne, *Vladimir Propp and the Study of Structure in Hebrew Biblical Narrative*, BLS 13 (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1988), 10.

<sup>24</sup> Milne, *Vladimir Propp*, 174.

<sup>25</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, trans. Monique Layton, vol. 2 (New York: Basic Books, 1976), 115; Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth," *Journal of American Folklore* 68 (1955): 428–44; Milne, *Vladimir Propp*, 24; Propp, *Morphology*, 14.

<sup>26</sup> Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, ed. Perry Meisel and Haun Saussy, trans. Wade Baskin (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 107.

rules that govern how those units can be combined. Both Propp and Lévi-Strauss apply this underlying theory to the folktale by stating that folktales, like language, are made up of constituent units and it is only through the combination of those elements that meaning is produced.<sup>27</sup> In Propp's formalist approach, the constituent unit of a tale is the function and the focus of his research is determining the rules that govern the combination of functions.<sup>28</sup> In contrast, Lévi-Strauss is concerned with the relationship between the constituent units and the folktale as a whole. To state it in linguistic terms, Propp is focused solely upon the syntax; while Lévi-Strauss is concerned with how the syntax produces the meaning of the whole.<sup>29</sup>

In order to examine how the syntax of the tale contributes to meaning, Lévi-Strauss identifies and separates the various constituent units of a tale. He asserts that meaning is found in multiple levels of a tale so he categorizes the units in two different ways; chronologically and conceptually.<sup>30</sup> Based upon this categorization system, two units of the tale may be unrelated in the chronological progression of the narrative, but they may be conceptually related if they address the same underlying theme. The conceptual relationship between units of a tale drives Lévi-Strauss' concern for the deep, abstract relationships found in folktales. These deep relationships often consist of binary oppositions and reflect the ways in which humans perceive their world.<sup>31</sup> In his concern

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<sup>27</sup> Lévi-Strauss, "Structural Study," 431; Propp, *Morphology*, 19.

<sup>28</sup> Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, 115, 131; Propp, *Morphology*, 20.

<sup>29</sup> Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, 141.

<sup>30</sup> Lévi-Strauss, "Structural Study," 431

<sup>31</sup> Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, 161

for the multiple levels of meaning within a folktale, Lévi-Strauss uses every variant version of the tale in his analysis and assumes that a tale consists of all its versions.<sup>32</sup> Lévi-Strauss' view of myth, as all the versions tied up into one, reflects the oral nature of these tales. Therefore, Lévi-Strauss makes a clear distinction between an oral tale given at a specific time and a written tale that has been subject to alteration as it is preserved. In light of this distinction, Lévi-Strauss concludes that a written tale no longer preserves the original structure of the tale and therefore cannot be analyzed in the same way as an oral tale.<sup>33</sup> This view becomes problematic when applying Lévi-Strauss' methodology to biblical scholarship since the biblical text is no longer preserved in an oral form.

The works of Propp and Lévi-Strauss together set the tone for the scholars who succeeded them. Their work has dictated a trend of decomposition in the study of folk literature. The main goal of studies following the models of Propp and Lévi-Strauss is to identify the component parts of the tale. These component parts are then used either to determine the sequence of events considered standard for a particular tale type or to explore the larger binary themes that the tale seeks to discuss.

### **Biblical Folklore Scholarship since Propp and Lévi-Strauss**

The trend that emerged from the work of Propp and Lévi-Strauss was not contained to folk literature alone. Many biblical scholars have attempted to apply Propp's and Lévi-Strauss' methodologies to biblical literature. One such example is Jack Sasson's 1979

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<sup>32</sup> Lévi-Strauss, "Structural Study," 435.

<sup>33</sup> Lévi-Strauss, "Structural Study," 430; J. W. Rogerson, *Myth in Old Testament Interpretation*, BZAW 134 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1974), 107–8.

commentary on Ruth, which presents a Proppian analysis of the biblical text.<sup>34</sup> Sasson proposes that the biblical authors, like the authors of all other types of literature, unconsciously followed patterns of writing with pre-established rules and regulations.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, he applies Propp's functions and his description of actors or tale roles to the story of Ruth. He concludes that Ruth fits into Propp's model of functions and therefore must be a folktale. However, he does not call it a folktale proper because Sasson asserts that folktales must have been orally transmitted at some point in time and there is no way to definitively determine that Ruth was originally an oral composition. Instead he proposes that Ruth was created upon a folktale model by "scribally oriented intelligentsia."<sup>36</sup> Although Sasson has applied Propp's model with no adaptation, he notes that further use of Propp's model for biblical and ANE literature would require refining or restructuring.<sup>37</sup> All in all, Sasson's work does demonstrate that describing biblical stories by the roles that the characters and their actions play in the narrative is a helpful tool for analyzing underlying narrative features and structures.

Another example is the work of Dorothy Irvin. Irvin credits her model to the work of Herman Gunkel; although, she too is influenced by Propp and Lévi-Strauss in her concern with the description and classification of folktales.<sup>38</sup> Although Irvin uses

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<sup>34</sup> Jack M. Sasson, *Ruth: A New Translation with a Philological Commentary and a Formalist-Folklorist Interpretation* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1979).

<sup>35</sup> Sasson, *Ruth*, 197.

<sup>36</sup> Sasson, *Ruth*, 214.

<sup>37</sup> Sasson, *Ruth*, 214–15.

<sup>38</sup> Dorothy Irvin, *Mytharion: The Comparison of Tales from the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East*, AOAT 32 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978), xiv.

Thompson's motif-index as the starting point for her study, she finds the index to be inadequate for biblical studies and seeks to improve upon that system of classification.<sup>39</sup> Rather than use the motif as the comparative element in a tale, Irvin uses the literary unit of the plot-motif, defined as "a plot element which moves the story forward a step."<sup>40</sup> Once the methodological foundation has been laid, Irvin analyzes multiple stories in the book of Genesis by identifying the various plot-motifs present in those stories and comparing them to tales with similar plot-motifs from Thompson's index. Irvin concludes that biblical literature contains traditional episodes that mirror those in ANE tales. The traditional episode functions like a traditional epithet in the works of Homer, which tells a standard tale and can be inserted at particular points in a narrative.<sup>41</sup> Although Irvin's study requires more methodological precision, especially where the identification of traditional episodes is concerned, she joins the long line of scholars who have identified similarities in the tales of the ANE and those found in the Bible.

One scholar who has done extensive work in the field of biblical folklore is Susan Niditch. Although she takes her own approach in the analysis of folktales, her methodological framework is influenced by the work of Propp. In order to examine biblical folklore, Niditch has developed what she calls an "overlay map technique."<sup>42</sup> Through this overlay map, Niditch is able to assess the various constituent parts of a narrative while allowing for several different layers of specificity concerning the content

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<sup>39</sup> Irvin, *Mytharion*, xiv-xv.

<sup>40</sup> Irvin, *Mytharion*, 2.

<sup>41</sup> Irvin, *Mytharion*, 9-11.

<sup>42</sup> Niditch, *Underdogs and Tricksters*, 28; Susan Niditch, *Folklore and the Hebrew Bible*, GBS, ed. Gene M. Tucker (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993), 21.

of those constituent parts. Niditch looks at four different layers of the narrative: the generic, the specific, the typological, and the individual. The generic features are the “lowest-common-denominator” features of a tale like the problem, plan, and outcome.<sup>43</sup> Each layer beyond the generic adds a level of specificity to the analysis until one reaches the individual level, which identifies the features that are unique to the particular story. The benefit of this style of analysis resides in its ability to address a particular narrative on multiple levels, allowing both the type and the individual story to be addressed in their own right.

Niditch has applied this overlay map model to various tales within the biblical narrative. The model is first demonstrated upon contents of Genesis; specifically the three wife-sister tales and the stories of Jacob and Joseph.<sup>44</sup> In these stories, Niditch is able to use the various layers of specificity to point out both their similarities and differences. Niditch also applies her overlay map technique to the examination of the motif of court success stories by comparing the tale of Joseph with those of Daniel and Esther.<sup>45</sup> In this case, Niditch also compares these tales to Aarne and Thompson’s motifs. In doing so, Niditch demonstrates that the motifs are present in each story and also addresses the cultural slant that each story contributes to the motif.<sup>46</sup> Niditch has also done extensive work in the book of Judges with particular attention given to the character of Samson in

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<sup>43</sup> Niditch, *Underdogs and Tricksters*, 28.

<sup>44</sup> Niditch, *Underdogs and Tricksters*, 23, 70.

<sup>45</sup> Susan Niditch and Robert Doran, “The Success Story of the Wise Courter: A Formal Approach,” *JBL* 96 (1977): 179–93; Niditch, *Underdogs and Tricksters*, 126.

<sup>46</sup> Niditch and Doran, “Success Story,” 182.

light of folktale motifs.<sup>47</sup> Niditch compares the Samson saga to the hero pattern in which the stories of the hero's birth, adventures, and death are recounted.<sup>48</sup> In addition to establishing Samson as a trickster and social bandit, Niditch also likens the story of Samson to Thompson's motifs of "Magic Strength Resides in Hair" and "Secret Source of Strength." Niditch concludes that these motifs do occur in the story of Samson; however, the writer uses them in a particularly Israelite way by coupling his hair with the Nazirite vow and indicating that the source of his strength is Yahweh.<sup>49</sup>

A recent study by Dolores Kamrada is also interested in the folktale motifs present in the Samson saga, as well as those in the stories of Jephthah and his daughter, and Saul.<sup>50</sup> Kamrada explores the use of the motifs and symbols in these tales as ideas that produce a theological framework for the society. Therefore, she attempts to reconstruct the possible myths that are at the core of the biblical narrative and contrast these underlying myths with the final version of the tale, essentially she conducts a diachronic analysis of a synchronic text.<sup>51</sup> In order to identify the motifs and symbols in each tale, Kamrada relies upon Thompson's motif index. For example, in her analysis of the Samson saga Kamrada focuses upon the hair motif as the essential theme of the

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<sup>47</sup> Susan Niditch, "Samson as Culture Hero, Trickster, and Bandit: The Empowerment of the Weak," *CBQ* 52 (1990): 608–24; Susan Niditch, *Judges*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 141–71.

<sup>48</sup> Niditch, "Samson as Culture Hero," 609.

<sup>49</sup> Niditch, "Samson as Culture Hero," 613, 616.

<sup>50</sup> Dolores G. Kamrada, *Heroines, Heroes, and Deity: Three Narratives of the Biblical Heroic Tradition*, LHBOTS 621 (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), xvii.

<sup>51</sup> Kamrada, *Heroines*, xvii, xxvii.

narrative.<sup>52</sup> It is her use of the motif-index however that proves to be one of the weaknesses in her study. Kamrada seems to assume that a listing in the index implies that a motif is utilized throughout all the folklore of a particular culture; however, the motif-index lists tales from all over the world and is highly influenced by scholarship on European folktales. Kamrada does not seem to examine where else the motifs occur and, particularly in the case of the hair motif, seems to assume that the motif is an ANE literary commonality. Also, her focus on the hair motif causes her to overlook other major features of the story. This led one reviewer to suggest that her analysis could have benefited from insights from gender studies, particularly in regard to the death of the heroes who are emasculated and feminized.<sup>53</sup>

### **Folkloric Studies of the Samson Saga**

As noted in this survey of scholarship, many of the folkloric inquiries into biblical literature have revolved around the accounts of the patriarchs in Genesis.<sup>54</sup> However, the book of Judges has also been a subject of interest in folkloric study. The narratives in the book of Judges are perceived by many scholars to be a strand of tales that are related to epic literature and are suggested to be representative of a type of Israelite lore or folk

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<sup>52</sup> Kamrada, *Heroines*, 67.

<sup>53</sup> Peter J. Sabo, review of Dolores G. Kamrada, *Heroines, Heroes, and Deity: Three Narratives of the Biblical Heroic Tradition*, RBL [<http://www.bookreviews.org>] (2018).

<sup>54</sup> Frank Moore Cross, “The Epic Traditions of Early Israel: Epic Narrative and the Reconstruction of Early Israelite Institutions,” in *The Poet and the Historian: Essays in Literary and Historical Biblical Criticism*, ed. Richard Elliott Friedman, HSS26 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), 13–40. Cross suggested that many of these stories reflect Homeric epics by recounting the events of the nation’s normative past through the use of patterns from traditional myth. This connection is what has led to the centrality of the patriarchal stories in biblical folklore scholarship.

tradition.<sup>55</sup> Of all the judges, Samson has drawn the most attention from folklore studies due to his great strength, hair, and wild adventures.<sup>56</sup> However, as noted by Kamarada's study, folkloric approaches to Samson are mostly concerned with his hair and strength, giving little attention to his shenanigans with Delilah. In fact, the lack of attention given to Delilah is indicative of the larger lacunae of research concerning the interaction between the male warrior and the warrior goddess that is commonly found in the heroic literature of the ANE.<sup>57</sup>

Since Samson is the male hero character of the tale and the representative of the people of Israel, he is the character of interest for most studies. The focus upon Samson's hair in particular began with the folkloric studies of Frazer and Gunkel, both of whom note the significance of Samson's power being associated with his hair. Frazer indicates that there is a long standing tradition in folk literature for one's power to dwell in their hair.<sup>58</sup> Gunkel specifically associates Samson with the tales of individuals whose soul resides in different parts of their body including their hair.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Robert G. Boling, *Judges: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, AB 6A (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), 30–32; Lawson G. Stone, "Judges," in *Joshua, Judges, Ruth*, Cornerstone 3, ed. Phillip W. Comfort (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2012), 185–494; Frazer, *Folk-Lore*, ix; Gunkel, *The Folktale*, 33–35; Jack M. Sasson, *Judges 1–12: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 6D (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 14; Niditch, *Judges*, 3.

<sup>56</sup> Robert Alter, "Samson Without Folklore," in *Text and Tradition: The Hebrew Bible and Folklore*, ed. Susan Niditch (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 47–56; Joseph Blenkinsopp, "Some Notes on the Saga of Samson and the Heroic Milieu," *Scripture* 11 (1959): 81–89; Kamarada, *Heroines*, xvii; Othniel Margalith, "The Legends of Samson/Heracles," *VT* 37 (1987): 63–70; Niditch, "Samson as Culture Hero," 609.

<sup>57</sup> Mark S. Smith, *Poetic Heroes: Literary Commemorations of Warriors and Warrior Culture in the Early Biblical World*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 130.

<sup>58</sup> Frazer, *Folk-lore*, 272.

<sup>59</sup> Gunkel, *The Folktale*, 123.

The focus on Samson is maintained in modern research. For example, in his work on Israelite hero culture Gregory Mobley takes an interest in the Samson saga. He briefly mentions the role of Delilah and the other women as the division markers of the tale surrounding Samson's interactions with the women. He notes that Delilah in particular functions to domesticate the wild man.<sup>60</sup> However, his main focus is upon the heroic character of Samson, who he compares to the chaos monster in the *Enumma Elish* based upon the fact that he wears his long hair in braids and battles beasts.<sup>61</sup> In his dissertation on Samson, Mobley does identify a parallel connection between the encounter of Samson and Delilah and the encounter of Gilgamesh and Ishtar; however, since his focus is on the entire Samson saga he does not fully explore this parallel.<sup>62</sup>

Othniel Margalith takes a more comparative approach than Mobley; however, his comparative work focuses upon the connections between the Samson saga and Greek mythology. Margalith draws connections between the various characteristics of Samson and those of the Greek hero Hercules.<sup>63</sup> Although Margalith does explore the similarities between Samson and Hercules with regard to their encounters with women, the focus remains on the motif of the hero who meekly allows himself to be bound only to demonstrate his strength.<sup>64</sup> The life and adventures of the hero as a whole dominate

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<sup>60</sup> Gregory Mobley, *The Empty Men: The Heroic Tradition of Ancient Israel*, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 2005), 193.

<sup>61</sup> Mobley, *The Empty Men*, 203.

<sup>62</sup> Gregory Mobley, "Samson, The Liminal Hero: A Comparative Study of Judges 13–16 and Ancient Near Eastern Heroic Tradition" (PhD Dissertation, Harvard University, 1994), 156.

<sup>63</sup> Othniel Margalith, "More Samson Legends," *VT* 36 (1986): 397–405; Othniel Margalith, "Samson's Riddle and Samson's Magic Locks," *VT* 36 (1986): 225–34; Margalith, "The Legends of Samson," 64.

<sup>64</sup> Margalith, "The Legends of Samson," 64.

Margalith's comparisons between Samson and Hercules; thus, this renders the hero's encounter with a woman a small, less significant portion of the story. Like other heroic analyses of Samson, Margalith draws attention to Samson's hair. In the case of his powerful hair, Margalith expands his comparison to all Greek mythology by looking at characters, other than just Hercules, who also maintained their power by having uncut hair.<sup>65</sup>

In her work on Judges, Niditch describes Samson as a bandit culture hero, that is, a hero whose tales involve challenging the power establishment on behalf of the weaker individuals.<sup>66</sup> Niditch notes that Samson represents an Israelite expression of the folklore motif of "Magic Strength Resides in Hair" and his encounter with Delilah represents the type-scene of "Secret of Strength Treacherously Discovered."<sup>67</sup> Although Niditch discusses the encounter with Delilah, her main focus is upon Samson as the hero and she concludes that the scene has more to do with Samson's hubris than it does Delilah's deception.<sup>68</sup> Niditch takes a folkloric approach to the Samson saga and she even notes that the tale of Samson and Delilah is the most traditional part of the saga; however, her focus is upon the Israelite tale alone with little to no comparative notes concerning the scene of Samson and Delilah.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Margalith, "Samson's Riddle," 232–33.

<sup>66</sup> Niditch, "Samson as Culture Hero," 609.

<sup>67</sup> Niditch, *Judges*, 144.

<sup>68</sup> Niditch, *Judges*, 167.

<sup>69</sup> Niditch, *Judges*, 169.

Niditch's focus upon Samson and his hubris is indicative of the larger trend within Judges research of giving most of the attention to Samson when discussing Judg 16. Even though some scholars mention Delilah and the aesthetics of the narrative, the main focus is upon Samson and his actions as a representative of Israel.<sup>70</sup> Overall, studies of Samson, particularly those with a folkloric interest, pay close attention to Samson and his hair while giving little discussion to his encounter with Delilah and her role in that scene. The comparative approaches to the Samson saga also focus upon the hair imagery by drawing connections other heroes who have uncut hair. These comparisons tend to extend broadly into Greek mythology and either overlook or do not fully expound the comparisons between the Samson saga and other ANE literature, while Delilah is rarely considered in these comparisons.

Studies that do give adequate attention to Delilah are more focused upon the gendered nature of the text rather than the folkloric nature of the narrative. For example, Mieke Bal takes a feminist approach to biblical love stories. In her analysis of Judg 16, Bal takes a psychoanalytic approach to the narrative and is also concerned with the reception history of the tale.<sup>71</sup> Her narrative analysis, which forms the basis of her further psychoanalysis, demonstrates that often Delilah's point of view is presented over against Samson's.<sup>72</sup> She points out that this is contrary to the expectation that the male hero should dominate the story. Based upon this narrative analysis, Bal concludes that Delilah

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<sup>70</sup> Daniel I. Block, *Judges, Ruth*, NAC 6 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 392, 451; Trent Butler, *Judges*, WBC 8 (Nashville: Nelson, 2009), 356–60; Barry G. Webb, *The Book of Judges*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 392–408.

<sup>71</sup> Mieke Bal, *Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 9.

<sup>72</sup> Bal, *Lethal Love*, 39.

is the subject of the narrative, which makes the acquisition of information the object and Samson the arbiter since Delilah's success in her quest is dependent upon him.<sup>73</sup> Bal clearly demonstrates the important role that Delilah plays in the scene presented in Judg 16; however, her narrative analysis is simply the means to support her discussion of gender and history of reception rather than an analysis of the narrative as a whole and any connection it may have to other similar tales.

Cheryl Exum approaches the Samson saga with a concern for the gender ideology of the text and its role in promoting a patriarchal worldview.<sup>74</sup> Given this concern, Exum gives much attention to Delilah and her contribution to the scene; however, her ultimate goal is to demonstrate how the Samson saga reinforces the patriarchal values of the ANE through the binary oppositions that are presented in the text rather than the ways that Delilah contributes to an understanding of the scene.<sup>75</sup> Building upon the foundation laid by Bal and Exum, more recent gender studies of the Samson saga have turned the focus back to Samson to explore the role of his masculinity in the tale.<sup>76</sup> For example, Ela Lazarewicz-Wyrzykowska explores the connection between Samson's behavior and masculinity with a particular interest in the contribution made by male honor to the narrative's ideology.<sup>77</sup> Stephen Wilson examines Samson's masculinity from the lens of

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<sup>73</sup> Bal, *Lethal Love*, 56.

<sup>74</sup> J. Cheryl Exum, *Fragmented Women: Feminist (Sub)versions of Biblical Narratives*, JSOTSup 163 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 9, 32.

<sup>75</sup> Exum, *Fragmented Women*, 62, 72–73.

<sup>76</sup> Ela Lazarewicz-Wyrzykowska, "Samson: Masculinity Lost (and Regained)," in *Men and Masculinity in the Hebrew Bible and Beyond*, ed. Ovidiu Creangă, *The Bible in the Modern World* 33 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2010), 171–88.

<sup>77</sup> Lazarewicz-Wyrzykowska, "Samson," 172.

the male coming-of-age theme.<sup>78</sup> He concludes that the Samson saga presents a failure to come-of-age tale, which functions within the broader Israelite social context as a cautionary tale to young boys about the dangers of disobedience.<sup>79</sup> The movement in gender studies from a focus upon Delilah to an emphasis upon Samson further demonstrates how Delilah's role in the scene has been underemphasized in the scholarship on Judg 16.

### **A Different Approach to Samson: The Hero and His Temptress**

This brief overview of the scholarship on the Samson saga demonstrates that in specifically folkloric approaches Thompson's motif of magic residing in the hair has caught the attention of many biblical scholars. However, another motif has also been of interest to biblical scholars due to its appearance in the Joseph saga, namely, the "K2111 Potiphar's Wife Motif."<sup>80</sup> Thompson categorizes the motif under false accusations and broadly defines it as "a woman makes vain overtures to a man then accuses him of attempting to force her."<sup>81</sup> John Yohannan has defined more specifically the plot of this motif as a handsome man, of upright character is sexually approached by his older stepmother. He recoils with horror from her advance and states his loyalty to his father.

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<sup>78</sup> Stephen M. Wilson, "Samson the Man-Child: Failing to Come of Age in the Deuteronomistic History," *JBL* 133 (2014): 43–60; Stephen M. Wilson, *Making Men: The Male Coming-of-Age Theme in the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 134–45

<sup>79</sup> Wilson, "Samson the Man-Child," 57; Wilson, *Making Men*, 142.

<sup>80</sup> Susan Tower Hollis, "The Woman in Ancient Examples of the Potiphar's Wife Motif K2111," in *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel*, ed. Peggy L. Day (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1989), 28–42; Thompson, *Motif-Index*, 4.474.

<sup>81</sup> Thompson, *Motif-Index*, 4.474.

The stepmother, angered by the rejection, accuses the man of rape. Although the father wants to believe in the man's innocence, he subjects the man to punishment; however, in the end the man is found innocent and is promoted to a greater position of honor.<sup>82</sup>

Yohannan's synthesis of the narrative features in this motif relies upon the stories listed in Thompson's index, which includes Greek tales, medieval romances, European folktales, and Persian tales. The breadth of space and time that these tales cover can make for difficult comparison and little can be said about the relationship between these various folktales. The all-encompassing nature of the listings in the motif index can result in focusing upon one feature of the text, which may or may not be the main feature. For example, the tales in Yohannan's description of the "Potiphar's Wife Motif" focus upon the incestual nature of the sexual advance of the stepmother. However, this excludes the chief tale, Joseph and Potiphar's wife in Genesis 39, because the text makes no reference to a familial relationship, genuine or fictive, between Joseph and Potiphar's wife. These studies, which have a broad range of tales, attest to the ubiquitous nature of the motif themes. However, more localized approaches are preferable for detailed analyses of the contents of the motif, because they are better able to take into consideration the specific cultural milieu from which these tales derived.

More localized approaches to the "Potiphar's Wife Motif" often juxtapose the story of Joseph and *The Tale of Two Brothers* with the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and *The Tale of Aqhat*.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> John D. Yohannan, ed., *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife in World Literature: An Anthology of the Story of the Chaste Youth and the Lustful Stepmother* (New York: New Directions, 1968), 1.

<sup>83</sup> W. F. Albright, "Historical and Mythical Elements in the Story of Joseph," *JBL* 37 (1918): 111–43; W. F. Albright, "The 'Natural Force' of Moses in Light of Ugaritic," *BASOR* 94 (1944): 32–35; Michael C. Astour, *Hellenosemitica: An Ethic and Cultural Study in West Semitic Impact on Mycenaean Greece* (Leiden: Brill, 1965), 258–60; Delbert R. Hillers, "The Bow of Aqhat: The Meaning of a Mythological Theme," in *Orient and Occident: Essays Presented to Cryus H. Gordon on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Harry A. Hoffner Jr., AOAT 22 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1973), 71–80; Hollis, "Woman in Ancient Examples," 28; Irvin, *Mytharion*, 106; Dorothy Irvin, "The

Yohannan's description of the "Potiphar's Wife Motif" does not seem to align with the narratives found in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and *The Tale of Aqhat* as well as it aligns with the Genesis account and *The Tale of Two Brothers*. By focusing exclusively on the ANE stories related to the "Potiphar's Wife Motif," Delbert Hillers and Susan Tower Hollis both arrive at a different set of narrative criteria for the motif. Hillers and Hollis both state that the motif pattern begins with a young man, usually a hunter, who is sexually approached by a woman, either human or deity. The young man resists the approach in some way but is still punished or killed in a manner that almost always features the emasculation of the man and is occasionally followed by his final resurrection.<sup>84</sup>

Although Hillers and Hollis arrive at a similar description of the motif, they each have different focuses in their analysis. Hillers approaches the tale as a seduction scene focusing upon the hero's emasculation. Hollis views the tale as part of a rite of passage from one social status to another. Her analysis focuses on the contribution of the "negative" women in bringing about a positive change in the life of the men. Even with a localized approach, these two scholars arrive at two different conclusions concerning the main goal of the motif. Thus, their studies function as a starting point for a study of the localized expression of the "Potiphar's Wife Motif." However, there is still a need for further study to explore the core features and theme of the generalized motif as well as the local variations upon that core theme.

A more localized approach to the motif also creates space to incorporate other tales that can be overlooked in the broader approaches to the motif. For example, the

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Joseph and Moses Stories as Narrative in the Light of Ancient Near Eastern Narrative," in *Israelite and Judaeon History*, ed. John H. Hayes and J. Maxwell Miller (London: SCM, 1977), 180–202.

<sup>84</sup> Hillers, "The Bow of Aqhat," 71–77; Hollis, "Woman in Ancient Examples," 29.

traditional, non-localized “Potiphar’s Wife Motif” focuses upon the sexual, and often incestual nature of the woman’s approach. However, that excludes the majority of the ANE expressions of the motif. The localized descriptions of the motif presented by Hillers and Hollis move away from this traditional focus and present the interaction as an encounter between a warrior and a woman, in which the woman functions as some sort of temptress. This general description corresponds to a story type that Dorothy Irvin suggests is typical in hero tales. She suggests that when telling a story about the adventures of a young hero there should be lulls between events when sirens attempt to seduce the young hero.<sup>85</sup> In light of these descriptions of this particular story type, the title “The Hero and His Temptress” seems to more accurately describe the motif than the “Potiphar’s Wife Motif.” This generalized description of the encounter between a hero and a temptress figure also lends itself to the inclusion of the story of Samson and Delilah in Judg 16 as an example of the motif. This is particularly true when one recognizes the importance of the feminization of Samson as well as the role that Delilah plays in his demise, both of which are features that Hillers and Hollis emphasize in their analyses of the motif.<sup>86</sup>

I propose that the traditional descriptions of the motif in question are too narrowly defined, to the exclusion of a key exemplar of the motif found in the story of Samson and Delilah. I suggest that the ANE warrior culture features a folkloric motif concerning a particular type of interaction between the warrior and the warrior female, in which the

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<sup>85</sup> Irvin, *Mytharion*, 106.

<sup>86</sup> Caroline Blyth, *Reimagining Delilah’s Afterlives as Femme Fatale: The Lost Seduction*, LHOTS 652 (London: T & T Clark, 2017), 69–70; Butler, *Judges*, 352; Lazarewicz-Wyrzykowska, “Samson,” 177–78; Niditch, *Judges*, 165–67.

female character is featured as a temptress. This motif, which I entitle “The Hero and His Temptress,” is a more accurate description of the particular ANE expression of the “Potiphar’s Wife Motif” listed in Thompson’s motif-index. The purpose of this study is to articulate a more generalized description of the features of the ANE expression of this motif and to demonstrate it is more accurately described as the motif of “The Hero and His Temptress,” which appears in the biblical example of Judg 16 and in the ANE examples of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, *The Tale of Aqhat*, and *The Tale of Two Brothers*.

## CHAPTER 2 METHODOLOGY

By examining the ANE expression of the K2111 “Potiphar’s Wife Motif,” this study presents a more generalized description of the ANE motif as “The Hero and His Temptress,” which allows for the incorporation of the tale of Samson and Delilah as an example of the motif and thereby situates Samson and Delilah among the cast of the heroic literature of the ANE. The methodology used to accomplish this goal finds its home at the junction between folklore studies, comparative studies, and narrative studies. Therefore, this chapter will outline some of the prominent approaches in each of these fields and establish the methodology of this study, which encompasses a conglomeration of techniques from these three fields.

### **Folklore Methodology**

Folklore studies are commonly associated with the study of fairytales; however, the material categorized as folklore is much broader than the fairytale alone. For this study, the literary material of interest will be categorized as folklore or folk literature based upon Susan Niditch’s definition of folklore as the “traditional.” She notes that much of

biblical literature is traditional-style literature in the sense that it is not traceable to a single author and has repeated patterns of thought, content, and language.<sup>1</sup>

The particular methodology from the field of folklore studies that will be incorporated into this study is the structural analysis of narrative. Alan Dundes defines structuralism as the “the study of the interrelationships or organization of the component parts of an item of folklore.”<sup>2</sup> This study will use a structuralist approach in order to identify and describe the narrative scene based upon its component parts.

The structural study of folklore finds its roots in the works of Vladimir Propp and Claude Lévi-Strauss. At its core, structural studies are concerned with the interrelationships between the component parts of a tale. The initial step of a structural study is the identification of the component parts. For Propp, the smallest unit of the tale is the “function.”<sup>3</sup> A function is determined based upon the actions of the *dramatis personae* within the tale. The various functions are then combined together to create the framework of the tale. Propp’s functions describe the action of the *dramatis personae* within the flow of the narrative and are thereby bound to their place within the narrative sequence.<sup>4</sup> By limiting his analysis to the linear relationship between functions and

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<sup>1</sup> Susan Niditch, *Underdogs and Tricksters: A Prelude to Biblical Folklore* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), xiv–xiii; Susan Niditch, *Folklore and the Hebrew Bible*, GBS, ed. Gene M. Tucker (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993), 9.

<sup>2</sup> Alan Dundes, “Structuralism and Folklore,” in *Meaning of Folklore: The Analytical Essays of Alan Dundes*, ed. Simon J. Bronner (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 2007), 123–53.

<sup>3</sup> Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, ed. Louis A. Wagner, 2nd ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968), 18–19.

<sup>4</sup> Propp, *Morphology*, 20; Vladimir Propp, “Structure and History in the Study of the Fairy Tale,” trans. Hugh T. McElwain, *Semeia* 10 (1976): 57–84, originally published as Vladimir Propp “Struttura e storia nello studio della favola,” 201–27 in *Morfologia della fiaba*, Nuovo Biblioteca Scientifica Einaudi 13 (Turin: Einaudi) 1966.

character roles, Propp's approach focuses upon the compositional scheme of the tale on the narrative surface.<sup>5</sup> For example, Propp describes one particular type of folktale that beginnings with the function titled "absence." In the absence function, one of the family members is absent from the initial scene. The specifics of this function can vary from tale to tale. For example, the family member could be a parent, a grandparent, or a child, who could be absent due to a business endeavor, a trip, or death; the specific possibilities are endless.<sup>6</sup> The absence function is followed by the function titled "interdiction," where a prohibition is given to the hero.<sup>7</sup> As in the previous function, there are endless possibilities for the specifics of the prohibition. The giving of the prohibition inevitably leads to the breaking of the prohibition and the introduction of the problem that will drive the rest of the folktale. Thus, the action in each function paves the way for the action of the next function, creating a linear progression.

By contrast, Lévi-Strauss examines the constituent parts of a narrative on multiple levels.<sup>8</sup> He focuses upon the binary oppositions that are presented in the tale and draws meaning from those oppositions, even if the tale must be read out of narrative sequence to identify those oppositions.<sup>9</sup> For example, in his analysis of the Oedipus myth, Lévi-Strauss divides the sections of the story into columns and lines, similar to a musical

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<sup>5</sup> Pamela J. Milne, "Folktales and Fairy Tales: An Evaluation of Two Proppian Analyses of Biblical Narratives," *JSOT* 34 (1986): 35–60.

<sup>6</sup> Propp, *Morphology*, 24–25.

<sup>7</sup> Propp, *Morphology*, 26–28.

<sup>8</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth," *Journal of American Folklore* 68 (1955): 428–44.

<sup>9</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, trans. Monique Layton, vol. 2 (New York: Basic Books, 1976), 65; Lévi-Strauss, "Structural Study," 431.

score. He places the events of the story into lines as they happen chronologically and groups thematically corresponding events together in columns. As a result, the events should be read according to the lines to understand the sequence of events, but according to the columns to understand the meaning of the myth.<sup>10</sup> So in the Oedipus myth the first column lists the events that have to do with overrating blood relationships, while the second has do with underrating blood relationships, and the third column are events in which monsters are slain. By dividing the events of a myth in this manner, Lévi-Strauss' approach is concerned with the abstract relationships among the elements within a tale rather than the linear development of the plot. Although Propp and Lévi-Strauss take two different approaches to determining and assessing the component parts of a narrative, both agree that isolating the component parts of a tale is the first step to a structural study.

Almost all structural analyses find their origin in the work of Propp or Lévi-Strauss; however, there is no standard method for applying their work. Many practitioners use the same terminology as Propp for the constituent parts: the function and tale role.<sup>11</sup> But as critics have noticed, these studies do not apply Propp's method in a standard fashion even though they are using the same terms and definitions. The works of Jack Sasson and Joseph Blenkinsopp provide two examples of how biblical scholars in particular have applied Propp's approach. However, as Pamela Milne has pointed out,

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<sup>10</sup> Lévi-Strauss, "Structural Study of Myth," 433.

<sup>11</sup> Joseph Blenkinsopp, "Biographical Patterns in Biblical Narrative," *JSOT* 20 (1981): 27–46; Ilana Dan, "The Innocent Persecuted Heroine: An Attempt at a Model for the Surface Level of the Narrative Structure of the Female Fairy Tale," in *Patterns in Oral Literature*, ed. Heda Jason and Dimitri Segal (The Hague: Mouton, 1977), 13–30; Rina Drory, "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves: An Attempt at a Model for the Narrative Structure of the Reward-and-Punishment Fairy Tale," in *Patterns in Oral Literature*, ed. Heda Jason and Dimitri Segal (The Hague: Mouton, 1977), 31–48; Jack M. Sasson, *Ruth: A New Translation with a Philological Commentary and a Formalist-Folklorist Interpretation* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1979), 200–14.

neither Sasson nor Blenkinsopp fully emulate Propp's method when they applied it to their narratives.

A complication with employing Propp's method is the interrelationship between the constituent units of the tale. Propp's method dictates that the tale role derives from the function. For example, the function of villainy describes the action of harm coming to a character. In this function, the character causing the harm is the villain and the recipient of the harm is typically the hero or a member of the hero's family.<sup>12</sup> Thus, the villain enters the scene as the character who disturbs the peace. However, later in the tale the character identified as the villain can fulfill a different role in a different function. For example, the villain who disturbed the peace can also be the donor who gives a required item to the hero. Therefore, one character can be involved in multiple spheres of action and fill more than one role in the tale.<sup>13</sup> Hence it is the actions taken by an individual character that determine the role that character plays within each function.<sup>14</sup> In other words, it is the functions that determine the tale role of each character. However, Sasson's study prescribes tale roles to characters rather than allowing the functions to determine the tale role.<sup>15</sup>

The interrelationship between the consistent units of the tale demonstrates another complication with applying Propp's method; namely, it was constructed specifically for

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<sup>12</sup> Propp, *Morphology*, 29.

<sup>13</sup> Propp, *Morphology*, 72–73.

<sup>14</sup> Milne, "Folktales and Fairy Tales," 45; Propp, *Morphology*, 18, 72.

<sup>15</sup> Milne, "Folktales and Fairy Tales," 44–45.

the Russian heroic fairytale.<sup>16</sup> Propp developed his list of possible functions by analyzing a group of tales from a single genre. Thus, his method cannot be applied directly to other genres of literature because the set list of functions may be different. For example, Blenkinsopp's study applies Propp's method to the genre of biography. In his analysis, he draws a number of correlations between the biography and Propp's functions; however, the description of these correlations is vague and does not support the conclusion that Propp's method can be applied to biographical elements in narrative.<sup>17</sup> Thus, the studies of Sasson and Blenkinsopp confirm that Propp's methodology is tailored to the Russian fairytale and requires some form of alteration before it is applied to other narrative genres.<sup>18</sup>

Working off a foundation built by Propp, Heda Jason analyzes the narrative structure of oral literature in light of its two constituent units: the tale role and the action.<sup>19</sup> These two units combine together to create the function, so that the function is comprised of one action and two tale roles in which one tale role serves as the subject and the other as the object of the action.<sup>20</sup> For example, one function is titled "the donor tests

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<sup>16</sup> Milne, "Folktales and Fairy Tales," 36–38.

<sup>17</sup> Blenkinsopp, "Biographical Patterns," 38–41; Dan, "The Innocent Persecuted Heroine," 27; Milne, "Folktales and Fairy Tales," 49–50. One study that seems to appropriately apply Propp's method is Ilana Dan's study on the female fairy tale. Although Dan's study lacks a clear synthesis and analysis of the findings, so the broader application and implications of the study are ambiguous.

<sup>18</sup> In his study, Sasson notes that even though he applied Propp's model with little to no adaptation, the model does need to be refined in order to apply it to the literary material of the Bible and the ANE. Of this material, Sasson identifies the *Tale of Two Brothers*, the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, and the *Tale of Aqhat* as examples of ANE tales that could benefit from a Proppian style analysis. Sasson, *Ruth*, 214.

<sup>19</sup> Heda Jason, "A Model for Narrative Structure in Oral Literature," in *Patterns in Oral Literature*, ed. Heda Jason and Dimitri Segal (The Hague: Mouton, 1977), 99–139.

<sup>20</sup> Jason, "A Model for Narrative Structure," 101–102.

the hero.” In this function, the character of the donor is the subject who performs the action of testing and the object of the action is the character of the hero.<sup>21</sup> Jason then combines these functions into groups of three to create “moves.” A move consists of a stimulus function, a response function, and a result function.<sup>22</sup> For example, the first function of a move could be the donor tests the hero, this function is the stimulus that initiates the action sequence. The stimulus function is then followed by the response function: the hero responds to the test. The third and final function of the sequence is the result function; in this case, the donor compensates the hero. These three-part moves are connected to one another to compose an entire tale. In this model of tale composition, the function and move are the abstract, constructed units of a tale that get filled with narrative specifics from what Jason refers to as the “lexicon” of the narrative repertoire.<sup>23</sup> For example, returning to the move cited earlier the three functions are the donor tests the hero, the hero responds to the test, and the donor compensates the hero. The narrative specifics in one instance could be Elijah tests the poor woman to see if she has prepared food, the woman responds that she is poor and has no food, and Elijah gives financial compensation to the poor woman.<sup>24</sup> Thus, each individual tale will have different items to fill the abstract roles of hero and donor as well as different specifics to fill out the nature of the test, response, and subsequent compensation. This lexicon of narrative specifics is culture bound and contains the explicit characters and events that complete the tale by

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<sup>21</sup> Jason, “A Model for Narrative Structure,” 101–102.

<sup>22</sup> Jason, “A Model for Narrative Structure,” 102.

<sup>23</sup> Jason, “A Model for Narrative Structure,” 106.

<sup>24</sup> Jason, “A Model for Narrative Structure,” 102.

fulfilling the function. Thus, Jason's study contains many elements that were developed by Propp, but she makes some adjustments to begin finding ways to apply his method to literature beyond the Russian fairytale.

Another complication when implementing Propp's methodology is the confusion of the constituent units since many scholars use different terminology to describe the constituent parts of the tale. Propp uses the terms function and tale role to describe his two major units of folk literature; however, many scholars use different terms and descriptions of these units. One such confusion of terminology is the use of the term "motif." Stith Thompson has done extensive work in the area of motif classification and defines a motif as "the smallest element in a tale having the power to persist in tradition."<sup>25</sup> The motif is Thompson's constituent unit of study but there are inconsistencies in what constitutes a motif. For example, at times he presents a motif as a particular trait of a character, like motif D1831 "Magic Strength Resides in One's Hair." While at other times a motif can be an entire narrative event, like motif D830 "Magic Object Acquired by Trickery" or motif K2111 "Potiphar's Wife." The vagueness in Thompson's definition of motif leads to inconsistencies in studies that follow his definition. For example, Dolores Kamrada's study utilizes Thompson's motif index and his definition of motif in a study of the Samson saga. Therefore, like Thompson's Motif Index, some motifs she identifies are character traits, like hair, while others are actions, like barrenness magically cured.<sup>26</sup> The larger inconsistency comes when comparing these

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<sup>25</sup> Stith Thompson, *The Folktale* (New York: Dryden, 1946), 415.

<sup>26</sup> Dolores G. Kamrada, *Heroines, Heroes, and Deity: Three Narratives of the Biblical Heroic Tradition*, LHBOTS 621 (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 72–74.

motifs across various tales. For example, Kamrada compares the hair of Samson with the hair of Humbaba in the Epic of Gilgamesh. In these stories, Samson and Humbaba fulfill different roles in the tale, hero and villain, which raises the question does the role of the character influence the motif? Kamrada's analysis seems to imply that the motif is not bound to aspects of the narrative since a motif can be found in both the hero and the villain.<sup>27</sup> However, this is contrary to the tale role in Propp's model which is limited by its relationship to the function, and that function is then bound to its place in the narrative sequence. So, according to Propp, the hero and the villain by definition cannot fulfill the same role in the same function. Consistency in terminology is important since, as Alan Dundes notes, determining the component parts of a tale is an important first step before comparative work can take place.<sup>28</sup> A trustworthy comparison can be conducted only if the comparative units are clearly defined.

Dundes emphasizes the need for carefully defined units in comparative folklore studies and he states that Thompson's motif and tale type are not precise enough.<sup>29</sup> Dundes defines units as "utilitarian logical constructs of measure which, though admittedly relativistic and arbitrary, permit greater facility in the examination and comparison of the materials studied in the natural and social sciences."<sup>30</sup> The unit therefore, when applied to folk literature, is a standard item that will be compared across tales. Although conceived by the researcher, a clearly defined unit allows for

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<sup>27</sup> Kamrada, *Heroines, Heroes and Deity*, 88–89.

<sup>28</sup> Alan Dundes, "From Etic to Emic Units in the Structural Study of Folktales," *The Journal of American Folklore* 75 (1962): 95–105.

<sup>29</sup> Dundes, "From Etic to Emic," 99–100.

<sup>30</sup> Dundes, "From Etic to Emic," 96.

standardized comparison. Dundes states that units must be standards of quantity and they must be something that can be broken down into smaller units or combined in to larger units.<sup>31</sup> In this case, Dundes' description of the unit is similar to Propp's functions in that they can be combined into larger units and broken down into smaller units like the tale role.

However, Propp's functions are limited in that they cannot be defined apart from their location in the story.<sup>32</sup> Thus, a comparison is difficult to make since each function is bound to its place in the narrative. Therefore, Dundes suggests using the categories of etic and emic to describe folktale units. The etic element, which he terms the motifeme, is a nonstructural, classification category applied to the text to aide in productive comparisons. The emic element, which Dundes calls the allomotif, is related to the structure of a text and defines how the specific motifeme is expressed in the text.<sup>33</sup> In other words, the motifeme is represented by the generic action and the allomotif is the specific action occurring in a specific tale. For example, if one motifeme is "the hero is sent on a quest," then the allomotifs would be all the various types of quest or all the various characters that could send the hero on a quest. Thus, the allomotifs that could fill the spot of a motifeme are unlimited. Essentially, Dundes' motifeme is similar to Propp's function or Thompson's motifs, while the allomotif is more closely related to Jason's lexicon of the narrative repertoire. What sets Dundes' work apart is, in his estimation, the identification of motifemes and allomotifs is not the end of a structural study. He sees this

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<sup>31</sup> Dundes, "From Etic to Emic," 96.

<sup>32</sup> Propp, *Morphology*, 18–19.

<sup>33</sup> Dundes, "From Etic to Emic," 101.

type of structural analysis as a precursor to interpretation. The identification of the units of a tale is just the first step before interpretation and cross-cultural comparison, the true goals of the study, can be accomplished.<sup>34</sup>

While many studies utilize Dundes' theory of etic and emic units, there are still major differences in terminology for the etic and emic units. For example, Erhardt Gütgemeanns also uses the terminology of motifeme but he defines it as the relationship between a narrative action and the characters performing the act.<sup>35</sup> Using grammatical terminology, Gütgemeanns describes the motifeme as the verb plus a subject, or an action and an acting character. For example, one motifeme is titled "interdiction;" in this motifeme an actor gives a prohibition. The actor is the subject of the motifeme, and the verb is the act of giving a prohibition. Within the larger narrative framework, these motifemes are combined and organized in a logical sequence.<sup>36</sup> So that the motifeme of interdiction is often followed by the motifeme of violation, in which an actor violates the given prohibition. Based upon this definition, Gütgemeanns' motifeme is the same thing as Propp's function since it includes both the action and the dramatis persona and is bound to its place in the narrative sequence. In fact, Gütgemeanns uses the same titles for his motifemes that Propp uses for his functions. Even though he uses the same terminology, Gütgemeanns' motifeme is slightly different than Dundes' motifeme, which is not as concerned with the relationship between the action and the actor.

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<sup>34</sup> Dundes, "Structuralism and Folklore," 124.

<sup>35</sup> Erhardt Gütgemeanns, "Fundamentals of a Grammar of Oral Literature," in *Patterns in Oral Literature*, ed. Heda Jason and Dimitri Segal (The Hague: Mouton, 1977), 77–98.

<sup>36</sup> Gütgemeanns, "Fundamentals of a Grammar," 81–82.

Another iteration of Dundes' principle of motifemes and allomotifs is demonstrated in the work of Susan Niditch. Niditch uses Dundes' theoretical foundation as she creates a new approach which she terms "the overlay map technique." In this approach, Niditch utilizes four different levels of assessment: the generic, the specific, the typological, and the individual.<sup>37</sup> This four-level approach is based upon the underlying concept that the motifeme is a general unit that can be applied to all tales, while the allomotif consists of the specific way the unit is expressed. Niditch's generic level looks at the generic features of a story like problem, plan, and resolution, making this level much broader than Dundes' motifeme.<sup>38</sup> However, she relies on the same underlying concept; namely, the generic features can be applied to any tale. In the specific layer of the tale, Niditch fills out the basic details that comprise the generic features. For example, in her analysis of the wife-sister tale in Gen 12:10–20, Niditch lists the first generic element of the tale as the problem. In her specific elements, the problem is described as the marginal status of the protagonists. This gets elaborated in the typological elements where the problem is described as the husband and wife face famine and become sojourners in a foreign land. Finally, the specific elements identify Abram and Sarai as the husband and wife, while Egypt is listed as the foreign land.<sup>39</sup> The material that Niditch places in the specific layer is similar to what Dundes includes in the motifemes. Niditch adds two more levels of specificity to the tale through the typological and individual elements. So, in the case of Gen 12:10–20 the typological layer describes

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<sup>37</sup> Niditch, *Underdogs and Tricksters*, 42–43; Niditch, *Folklore and the Hebrew Bible*, 21.

<sup>38</sup> Niditch, *Underdogs and Tricksters*, 28.

<sup>39</sup> Niditch, *Underdogs and Tricksters*, 28.

the problem as the marginal status of the protagonists, while the specific layer identifies the protagonists as Abram and Sarai. Thus, Niditch's specific layer best corresponds to Dundes' allomotif since allomotifs fill out the details contained in a specific story.

Like Dundes, Dorothy Irvin notes that Thompson's definition of motif is too broad, particularly when applied to the limited corpus of the ANE literature; therefore, she suggests a stricter method. Irvin narrows Thompson's definition of the motif to "a plot element which moves the story forward a step."<sup>40</sup> Irvin terms this motif "the plot-motif"; its more narrow definition helps to distinguish between motifs and events since not all elements of a tale contribute to the movement of the plot.<sup>41</sup> In order to demonstrate the plot-motif, Irvin provides an example analysis of Gen 16 in which she identifies four plot-motifs: strife between wives which results in persecution; prediction of child's characteristics before birth; the naming of the child; and the explanation of the origin of a well or spring.<sup>42</sup> Although Irvin narrows Thompson's definition of motif to her plot-motif, she still compares the various plot-motifs she identifies with Thompson's motifs, implying that functionally the two items are the same, despite the fact that they are defined differently.

By limiting the plot-motif to elements that contribute to the plot, Irvin focuses her attention on characteristics of narratives that are distinguished from other literary forms.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Dorothy Irvin, "The Joseph and Moses Stories as Narrative in the Light of Ancient Near Eastern Narrative," in *Israelite and Judaeon History*, ed. John H. Hayes and J. Maxwell Miller (London: SCM, 1977), 180–202; Dorothy Irvin, *Mytharion: The Comparison of Tales from the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East*, AOAT 32 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978), 2.

<sup>41</sup> Irvin, "The Joseph and Moses Stories," 183; Irvin, *Mytharion*, 2–3.

<sup>42</sup> Irvin, *Mytharion*, 5.

<sup>43</sup> Irvin, "The Joseph and Moses Stories," 183.

Irvin's broader goal is to explore the larger narrative element of the traditional episode. The traditional episode is a series of events within a narrative that form a set part of the tale and functions like a Homeric traditional epithet to fill a section of narrative and move the plot forward.<sup>44</sup> Using again the example of Gen 16, Irvin discusses the traditional birth episode, in which the birth of the hero is told in a highly stylized way.<sup>45</sup> The focus of Irvin's study is on the traditional episode in order to draw conclusions concerning the history of composition for her passages of interest.

In a similar study, David Jaeger examines the theme of the initiatory trial of the hero. He uses the term theme or thematic unit based upon Albert Lord's theory of thematic composition for oral literature.<sup>46</sup> Although the terminology is different, Jaeger's theme is similar to Irvin's traditional episode. As for the smaller narrative units that comprise the larger theme, Jaeger calls them motifs or "conventional clusters."<sup>47</sup> These motifs, which are Jaeger's main focus in describing the larger theme, are similar to what Irvin terms the plot-motif which is akin to Thompson's motif. Thus, Jaeger identifies eighteen motifs within the theme of the initiatory trial of the hero, including the hero's humble background, the divine initiation of the heroic trial, and the assigning of a companion to the hero.<sup>48</sup> Although the standard theme contains eighteen motifs, all

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<sup>44</sup> Irvin, "The Joseph and Moses Stories," 183–84; Irvin, *Mytharion*, 9–10.

<sup>45</sup> Irvin, *Mytharion*, 10–11.

<sup>46</sup> David Kenneth Jaeger, "The Initiatory Trial of the Hero in Hebrew Bible Narrative" (PhD Dissertation, The University of Denver, 1992), 23, 52–53; Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), 65.

<sup>47</sup> Jaeger, "The Initiatory Trial," 53.

<sup>48</sup> Jaeger, "The Initiatory Trial," 79.

eighteen may not occur in each specific version of the theme, as demonstrated by some of the stories that Jaeger examines. His study provides another example of an approach to the constituent units of folk literature, particularly within the Hebrew Bible.

Despite the perceived lack of uniformity in the structural study of folk literature, there are general trends of similarity that undergird these various approaches. The main point of similarity is a conceptual framework that is rooted in Propp's model. Each of these studies is concerned with identifying the constituent units of the text and describing how those constituent units are combined to form a tale. Thus, structural approaches to folktales are concerned with the underlying grammar of the tale, and often follow development in the field of linguistics with regard to the relationship between the constituent units and the meaning of the text.<sup>49</sup> A second point of continuity between these various approaches is the dual-layered analysis of the constituent units. Each of the studies detailed above describe the constituent units of the text in at least two different layers — a general and a specific. This trend recognizes that folktales often contain similar features and provides a means for comparison across different tales.

### **Approach of this Study**

This study will follow the collective trend in the structural study of narrative by examining the selected narratives on two levels. The first level will be termed the general elements of the tale. The goal of this initial analysis will be to determine the general elements that comprise the tale. The general elements of the tale will be discussed in

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<sup>49</sup> Erhardt Gütgemanns, "What Is 'Generative Poetics?'" *Theses and Reflection Concerning a New Exegetical Method*, *Semeia* 6 (1976): 1–21; Heda Jason and Dimitri Segal, "Introduction," in *Patterns in Oral Literature*, ed. Heda Jason and Dimitri Segal (The Hague: Mouton, 1977), 1–10.

terms of the constituent unit of “event.” The event will be composed of an action performed by an actor or actors. This layer of the general elements is similar to Propp’s function, as well as Jason’s function, Dundes’ etic unit or motifeme, Güttgemanns’ motifeme, and Niditch’s generic and specific elements.<sup>50</sup> As Robert Culley notes, all structural analyses are selective in nature due to the extensive effort that a full structural analysis would require; therefore, the selected units of study must be relevant to the purpose of the study.<sup>51</sup> In this case, the purpose of the general elements is to establish a means of comparison between different tales. Thus, the events, or the actions performed by an actor, will be used evaluate the contents of each tale, compare the sequence of events, and to identify similar trends among the four tales of interest.

The second level of analysis will be the specific elements of the tale. The specific elements will examine the constituent unit of the event in terms of the specific, individual characters and their behavior. This layer of study is similar to Dundes’ allomotif, Jason’s lexicon of narrative repertoire, and Niditch’s typological and individual elements.<sup>52</sup> Dundes notes that structural analyses should be analytical tools used for the ultimate goal of interpretation.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, the specific elements of the tale will be examined with regard to their contributions to the meaning of the tale as a whole. Although the general elements will be the most prominent unit of comparison between the tales, the specific

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<sup>50</sup> Dundes, “From Etic to Emic,” 101; Güttgemanns, “Fundamentals of a Grammar,” 80; Jason, “A Model of Narrative Structure,” 101–102; Niditch, *Underdogs and Tricksters*, 28; Propp, *Morphology*, 19.

<sup>51</sup> Robert C. Culley, “Structural Analysis: Is It Done With Mirrors?,” *Interpretation* 28 (1974): 165–81.

<sup>52</sup> Dundes, “From Etic to Emic,” 101; Jason, “A Model of Narrative Structure,” 106; Niditch, *Underdogs and Tricksters*, 29.

<sup>53</sup> Dundes, “Structuralism and Folklore,” 124.

elements will still be considered in a comparative light. The interpretation of each scene, based upon the specific elements, will determine if each story has unique features allowing it to say something the other stories do not, while also determining if the four stories as a whole convey a message together that cannot be conveyed individually.<sup>54</sup>

A final term that needs defining for this study is the larger narrative unit of interest. As pointed out, the term motif is vague since scholars use this term to mean different things. The flaws with Thompson's motif as the smallest unit of a tale have been pointed out by the many scholars who try to redefine this unit.<sup>55</sup> Based upon Propp's analysis, Claude Bremond suggests that the larger narrative unit or archetypal situation should contain a compound sequence of functions.<sup>56</sup> In light of these various definitions and terms, this study will refer to the larger narrative unit as "the scene." The scene is comprised of a string of events and will be delimited within the larger literary work based upon the singular location of the interaction and the consistency of characters present in the scene.<sup>57</sup> Thus, when characters enter or exit the narrative frame or the narrative location changes a new scene will begin.

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<sup>54</sup> Culley, "Structural Analysis," 179.

<sup>55</sup> Irvin, *Mytharion*, 10–11; Jaeger, "The Initiatory Trial," 52–53; Heda Jason, *Motif, Type and Genre: A Manual for Compilation of Indices & A Bibliography of Indices and Indexing*, FF Communications 273 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 2000), 25; Thompson, *The Folktale*, 415.

<sup>56</sup> Claude Bremond, "Le Message Narratif," *Communications* 4 (1964): 4–32.

<sup>57</sup> Jason, "A Model for Narrative Structure," 104. This concept of a singular location and consistency of characters is derived from Jason's work on narrative structure. Jason identifies two categories of units within a narrative. The first is the function which is comprised of one action and two tale roles, while the other is the connective unit. A connective unit occurs between two parts of the narrative. There are two varieties of connective units: an information connective which gives new information and a transfer connective which relates a transfer in state, time, or space. In Jason's narrative structure, these connective units serve to break up the larger moves that occur within a tale.

## Narrative Methodology

The structural study of folk literature is inherently interwoven with narrative methodologies since it is through the process of reading the narrative that the general elements of the tale emerge. Therefore, this study will rely upon various narrative methodologies in order to identify and describe the general and specific elements of each tale. The main purpose for including insight from narrative methodologies in this study is to guard against the fragmentation of the text. Structural studies divide the narrative into multiple layers of units and sub-units, which can lead to the loss of the unified nature of the tale. Thus, maintaining a literary framework will allow for each constituent unit to be connected to the main plot of the scene and for each scene to be situated within the tale as a whole. In other words, a literary approach maintains the coherence of the text by asserting that each constituent element directly contributes to the overall communicative design of the narrative.<sup>58</sup> This assertion on the part of literary studies echoes Dundes' concern for interpretation. Dundes maintains that structuralism is not an end in itself; instead, it leads to the final goal of interpretation.<sup>59</sup> Thus, in this study, the main purpose for identifying the general and specific elements is not to decompose the tale into smaller pieces, but rather to examine how each element contributes to the narration of the tale.

In order to couple a literary approach with a structuralist approach, this study will examine the poetics of each scene, by considering the literary techniques utilized in each tale. A concern for the narrative poetics will assist with integrating the various

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<sup>58</sup> Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 2.

<sup>59</sup> Dundes, "Structuralism and Folklore," 124.

component parts into the scene as a unified whole and assessing the contribution of each part to the meaning of the scene. Adele Berlin notes that poetics is a way of looking at how a narrative is constructed; thus, poetics and structuralism naturally go hand in hand.<sup>60</sup> Structuralism provides a means for measuring the constituent units in a scene, while poetics provides a means for interpreting the significance of the constituent units. In fact, David Jobling suggests that a structuralist approach is a helpful counterbalance to a purely narrative approach to texts.<sup>61</sup> In his review of Robert Alter's *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, Jobling notes that since Alter focuses solely upon the literary artistry of the narrative, it would be beneficial to couple Alter's approach with another methodological framework, like structuralism, due to the complex array of features within narratives.<sup>62</sup> Thus, this study seeks to couple a literary approach to the text with a structuralist approach. The specific contributions of a literary approach to this study are a concern for characterization, point of view, and narration within each scene.

Literary approaches to characterization examine how characters in a tale are presented. The degree to which a character is described helps to categorize the character as either an agent, a type, or a full-fledged character.<sup>63</sup> The portrait of a specific character is determined by how the character is described in the narrative, the presentation of the character's inner life through their thoughts, speech, and actions, as well as through contrast with other characters. The combination of these narrative techniques make up the

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<sup>60</sup> Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*, BLS 9 (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1983), 15.

<sup>61</sup> David Jobling, "Robert Alter's, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*," *JSOT* 27 (1983): 87–99.

<sup>62</sup> Jobling, "Robert Alter's," 92–93.

<sup>63</sup> Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation*, 32.

characterization of a character.<sup>64</sup> In this study, each event will be assessed in terms of the actor in that event; therefore, characterization techniques will aid in the identification of actors and their specific traits.

The narrative point of view is related to the model of narration used in a tale: each event within a tale is presented from the point of view of a specific character and this point of view can alter how the events of a tale are interpreted.<sup>65</sup> The narration technique used in a tale determines whose point of view is presented; since most tales are told from the point of view of the omniscient narrator, the point of view often gives the audience more knowledge than is possessed by the individual characters.<sup>66</sup> Tales are often told by using a combination of narration and direct speech. Therefore, noting who is showing or telling the content of an event will influence how an event is interpreted. In this study, the narrative point of view will be important in the movement from identifying constituent parts to interpreting the tale. The use of direct speech over and against narration in a tale contributes to how the relationship between the actions and actors are perceived.<sup>67</sup> Thus, the relationship between narration and direct speech will directly contribute to the interpretation of the actor's role within the tale for this study.

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<sup>64</sup> Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation*, 32–41.

<sup>65</sup> Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation*, 43.

<sup>66</sup> Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation*, 43; Sternberg, *Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 75–78.

<sup>67</sup> Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 64.

## Comparative Methodology

The study of folklore is rooted in the comparative method since a large portion of folkloric studies is concerned with cross-cultural trends in folk literature, as evidenced in the formulation of folklore type indices and the application of those indices to various textual traditions.<sup>68</sup> These comparative endeavors often focus on what this study will refer to as the scene, that is the larger literary unit. These larger scenes are comprised of smaller units in a specific order; therefore, the comparison of scenes involves a consideration of the constituent units that occur in similar narrative situations.<sup>69</sup> Classical studies of the Homeric epic have identified these scenes as recurring units that are associated with the composition of tales.<sup>70</sup> In other words, a composer can draw upon a stock repertoire of recurring units to fill generic scenes when composing a tale. Yet these recurring scenes, or type-scenes as they are often termed, are not limited to the Homeric corpus; they are also present in other forms of narrative literature.<sup>71</sup> These recurring scenes have a direct relationship to the task of tale composition, causing these type-scenes to be often embedded with an inherent meaning.<sup>72</sup> Thus, comparing the use of

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<sup>68</sup> Dundes, "From Etic to Emic," 95; Patricia G. Kirkpatrick, *The Old Testament and Folklore Study*, JSOTSup 62 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1988), 13; Hermann Gunkel, *The Folktale in the Old Testament*, trans. Michael D. Rutter (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1987), 35; James George Frazer, *Folk-Lore in the Old Testament: Studies in Comparative Religion, Legend, and Law* (London: Macmillan, 1923), ix.

<sup>69</sup> Bremond, "Le Message Narratif," 23.

<sup>70</sup> John Miles Foley and Justin Arft, "The Epic Cycle and Oral Tradition," in *The Greek Epic Cycle and Its Ancient Reception: A Companion*, ed. Marco Fantuzzi and Christos Tsagalis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 78–95.

<sup>71</sup> Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 51; Irvin, *Mytharion*, 106; Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), 30–35; Niditch, *Underdogs and Tricksters*, xiii.

<sup>72</sup> Foley and Arft, "The Epic Cycle," 84.

these scenes is a way to gain insight into the underlying values of the tale-tellers or the audience when dealing with the interpretation of folk literature.<sup>73</sup> In this study, the analysis of the specific elements of each tale will explore the meaning embedded in each variation of the scene to determine how each culture uses the scene in their own way.

In the ongoing discussion concerning the use of the comparative method in biblical studies, many scholars have noted the importance of context when making comparisons so that comparisons of phenomena within the same historic context are preferred over grand scale comparisons.<sup>74</sup> In developing his scripture in context method, William Hallo also notes that the comparative method must be wedded to the contrastive method. This coupling accentuates that the goal of a comparison is not just to find points of continuity, but to also assess the points of discontinuity.<sup>75</sup> These conclusions about comparative methodology address many of the weaknesses of the folkloric motif and type indices. The Aarne and Thompson indices did not stress historical continuity when generating their lists of like motifs. Also, the narrative unit being compared was not

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<sup>73</sup> Irvin, "The Joseph and Moses Stories," 184.

<sup>74</sup> Jack M. Sasson, "About 'Mari and the Bible,'" *RA* 92.2 (1998): 97–123; Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 47–49; Brent A. Strawn, "Comparative Approaches: History, Theory, and Image of God," in *Method Matters: Essays on the Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Honor of David L. Petersen*, ed. Joel M. LeMon and Kent Harold Richards, Resources for Biblical Study 56 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 117–42; Shemaryahu Talmon, "The 'Comparative Method' in Biblical Interpretation - Principles and Problems," in *Congress Volume Göttingen, 1977*, ed. Walther Zimmerli, VTSupp 29 (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 320–56.

<sup>75</sup> William W. Hallo, "Biblical History in Its Near Eastern Setting: The Contextual Approach," in *Scripture in Context: Essays on the Comparative Method*, ed. Carl D. Evans, William W. Hallo, and John Bradley White, PTMS 34 (Pittsburg: Pickwick, 1980), 1–26; William W. Hallo, "Compare and Contrast: The Contextual Approach to Biblical Literature," in *The Bible in Light of Cuneiform Literature: Scripture in Context III*, ed. William W. Hallo, Bruce William Jones, and Gerald L. Mattingly, Ancient Near Eastern Texts and Studies 8 (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1990), 1–30.

clearly defined; thus, the similarities between tales were often over emphasized and the points of dissimilarity were not addressed.

In light of the comparative trends in both folkloric and biblical studies, this study will assess tales from similar historical frameworks, have clearly defined comparative units, and will consider both the points of continuity and discontinuity within these tales. In order to have a more accurate comparison, it is best to have at least three items to compare.<sup>76</sup> Thus, this study will look at four different tales: the Samson and Delilah narrative in Judg 16, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, *The Aqhat Epic*, and *The Tale of Two Brothers*. These four tales have been selected because they all feature an encounter between a male hero character and a female and these tales, with the exception of Judg 16, have often been grouped together based upon their similar features.<sup>77</sup> The specific comparative unit for this study will be the larger narrative unit of the scene. The scenes will be compared in light of the smaller constituent unit of the event, which is comprised an actor and their actions. Each event will be analyzed on two levels, that of the general and the specific. Since all comparisons are hermeneutical, the purpose for the comparison must be kept at the forefront of the study.<sup>78</sup> The goal of comparison in this study is to

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<sup>76</sup> Smith, *Drudgery Divine*, 51; Strawn, "Comparative Approaches," 129.

<sup>77</sup> W. F. Albright, "Historical and Mythical Elements in the Story of Joseph," *JBL* 37 (1918): 111–43; W. F. Albright, "The 'Natural Force' of Moses in Light of Ugaritic," *BASOR* 94 (1944): 32–35; Delbert R. Hillers, "The Bow of Aqhat: The Meaning of a Mythological Theme," in *Orient and Occident: Essays Presented to Cryus H. Gordon on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Harry A. Hoffner Jr., AOAT 22 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1973), 71–80; Susan Tower Hollis, "The Woman in Ancient Examples of the Potiphar's Wife Motif K2111," in *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel*, ed. Peggy L. Day (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1989), 28–42; Irvin, "The Joseph and Moses Stories," 186–187; Irvin, *Mytharion*, 106; Simon B. Parker, "Death and Devotion: The Composition and Theme of AQHT," in *Love & Death in the Ancient Near East: Essays in Honor of Marvin H. Pope*, ed. John H. Marks and Robert M. Good (Guilford, CT: Four Quarters, 1987), 71–83; Sasson, *Ruth*, 215.

<sup>78</sup> Smith, *Drudgery Divine*, 52; Strawn, "Comparative Approaches," 129.

clarify which events are indispensable to the content and structure of the scene in order to refine the description of the ANE expression of the “Potiphar’s Wife Motif.” The refined, more generalized description of the “Hero and His Temptress” allows for the inclusion of Judg 16 as an example of the motif and further illuminates the key features of the motif that unite these four tales.

Overall, this study will conduct a literary assessment of each of the four chosen tales in order to determine the general and specific elements of each event within the scene. The general elements will serve as the comparative unit between the various tales. The specific elements will be discussed utilizing insights from literary studies and will serve to describe each scene’s unique contribution to its tale. Once these elements have been identified for each tale, a comparison will be conducted in order to determine if these four tales belong to a common type-scene. In the comparison, I will also determine which elements are consistent elements of the type-scene and which are free to be in flux. Finally, based upon the comparison, an interpretation of the type-scene as a whole will be presented, taking into consideration the combined meaning of the tales and their individual contributions to the type-scene, specifically considering how Judg 16 is elucidated by its incorporation in this group of narratives.