

The Aqedah as ‘template’? Genesis 22 and 1 Kings 17–18

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Abstract

The story of Abraham’s willingness to give up his beloved son (Gen. 22) is a highly productive text – that is, it has triggered subsequent literary activity and played a significant role in the composition and shaping of other texts. In this essay, I want to first explore the possibility that 1 Kgs 17–18 is yet another text in which an author has alluded to Gen. 22 and then to reflect on the use of Gen. 22 as a source for narratives composed on analogies to it.

Keywords

Allusion, Elijah, Aqedah, Genesis 22, 1 Kings 17–18

1.0 Introduction

The story of Abraham’s willingness to give up his beloved son (Gen. 22) is a highly productive text – that is, it has triggered subsequent literary activity and has played a significant role in the composition and shaping of other texts. Perhaps the most obvious examples are the allusions to Gen. 22 in Judg. 11 (the story of Jephthah and his daughter)¹ and in Judg. 19 (the story of the Levite and his concubine).² But there are a number of additional texts in which researchers have identified allusions to Gen. 22, including Num. 22–24,³ 1 Sam. 17–24,⁴ 1 Kgs 3.16–28,⁵ and the frame narrative of Job.⁶ In this essay, I want to first explore the possibility that 1 Kgs 17–18 is yet another text

1. For the use of Gen. 21–22 in Judg. 11 (note Judg. 11.1–2 // Gen. 21.9–10; Judg. 11.30–39 // Gen. 22), see Zakovitch, 1995b: 72–74; Harvey, 2004: 94; Shemesh, 2011: 117–131; see already Pseudo-Philo, *Bib. Ant.* 40.2–3.
2. For the use of Gen. 22 in Judg. 19, see Unterman, 1980: 161–166; Harvey, 2004: 93–94.
3. For allusions to Gen. 22 in Num. 22–24, see Rouillard, 1985: 160–176; Safren, 1988: 105–113; Fisk, 2000: 485–491; Novick, 2007: 28–33.
4. Pleins, 1992: 29–38.
5. Kim, 2017: 93–94.
6. Japhet, 1994: 153–172; Hoffer, 2001: 86–87; Veijola, 2002: 127–144; Crenshaw, 2016: 26–27.

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in which an author has alluded to Gen. 22 and then to reflect on the implications of the highly productive nature of Gen. 22.

2.0 Thematic and lexical parallels in 1 Kings 17–19 and Genesis 21–22

Genesis 22 is an implicitly reflective text, examining questions about the certainty of God's provision, the reliability of God's promises, and the necessity of faith. It is clear that it has been composed in light of earlier stories about Abraham.⁷ This is particularly true in the case of Genesis 21; not only are Gen. 21 and 22 lexically linked,⁸ but also they are 'mirror stories' reflecting two incidents in which Abraham gives up a son and in which a threat of death to the son is averted by a divine intervention.⁹ And whether we explain Gen. 22.15–18 as original to the story or as an instance of *Fortschreibung*, these verses link the story very strongly to the book's theme of blessing and the promise of offspring (Gen. 12.1–3; 13.16; 15.5; 24.60). As I will demonstrate below, the connection of Gen. 22 to the surrounding material will be significant for how we evaluate Gen. 22's relationship to 1 Kgs 17–19.

2.1 Thematic and lexical parallels in Genesis 21 and 1 Kings 19

Let us begin with the observation that the story of Elijah's flight in 1 Kgs 19 has been patterned on the Hagar story in Gen. 21.¹⁰ This was recognized by Gunkel (1906: 22),

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7. Compare Gen. 12.1 (לְדָלֶךְ אֶל-אֶרֶץ הַמְּרִיָּה . . . אֲשֶׁר) and 22.2 (לְדָלֶךְ אֶל-אֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֲרָאךָ) and 22.2 (לְדָלֶךְ אֶל-אֶרֶץ הַמְּרִיָּה . . . אֲשֶׁר); both commands require Abraham to respond in faith in the face of the unknown. Similarly, the threat to Abraham's son Isaac in Gen. 22 presupposes the stories of the promise and birth of Isaac in e.g. Gen. 18.9–14; 21.1–7.
 8. See Gen. 21.14 // 22.3 (וַיִּשְׁכַּם אַבְרָהָם בַּבֶּקֶר); 21.16, 19 // 22.4, 8, 13, 14 (רָאָה); note that this repetitive wordplay already began in 16.13, 14; 21.16 // 22.4 (רָחַק); 21.14 // 22.6 (שִׁים עַל); 21.14 // 22.10, 12 (וַיִּשְׁלַח); 21.17 // 22.11 (מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם . . . וַיִּקְרָא מִלֵּאךְ); 21.17 // 22.13 (וַיִּשָּׂא אַבְרָהָם) (אֶת-עֵינָיו וַיִּרְאֵהוּ // וַיִּפְקַח אֱלֹהִים אֶת-עֵינָיו וַתִּרְאֵהוּ).
 9. On the deliberate juxtaposition of and connections between the stories of Ishmael in Gen. 21 and Isaac in Gen. 22, see Zakovitch, 1995a: 519–520; Nikaido, 2001: 219–242; Chung, 2017: 573–582. See also Steins, 1999: 147–163, esp. 147: 'Im Nahkontext von Gen 22 spielt 21.1–21 eine besondere Rolle, denn in dieser Perikope wird Gen 22 mit der Erzählung von der Geburt Isaaks und der Vertreibung der Hagar und ihres Sohnes Ismael vorbereitet. Isaak, der erst mit Gen 21, "ins Spiel kommt," ist am Ende der einzige, d.h. der einzig verbleibene Sohn Abrahams.'
 10. Garsiel understands the allusions in 1 Kgs 19 to be referencing Gen. 22: both texts describe a journey to or away from Beer-Sheba (1 Kgs 19.3; cf. Gen. 22.19), the leaving of a/the 'servant(s)' (נַעֲרֵי[ם], 1 Kgs 19.3; cf. Gen. 22.5), the motif of imminent death (1 Kgs 19.4; cf. Gen. 22.10), and a rescue by an angel (1 Kgs 19.5–7; cf. Gen. 22.11–12); see Garsiel, 2014: 87. However, all these elements can also be found in Gen. 21, which contains additional (and stronger) parallels. It therefore seems more likely that Gen. 21, and not Gen. 22, is the source of the parallels in 1 Kgs 19.

and others have since mapped out the allusions in a more extensive manner.¹¹ First, there are clear thematic and plot-based parallels between the two texts: in each, a character journeys into the wilderness, experiences a physical need, expects or wishes to die, and is the recipient of divine provision. Second, these texts share a number of lexical parallels: in both Gen. 21.14 and 1 Kgs 19.3–4, a character ‘goes’ (הלך) into the ‘wilderness’ (מדבר) near ‘Beer-Sheba’. In Gen. 21.15, Ishmael is cast ‘under one of the bushes’ (תחת אחד השיחם), whereas in 1 Kgs 19.4, 5 Elijah sits ‘under one broom tree’ (תחת רתם אחד). In both Gen. 21.16 and in 1 Kgs 19.4, there is either a fear of, or a desire for, ‘death’ (מות). In both Gen. 21.17 and 1 Kgs 19.5, an ‘angel’ (מלאך) appears, and in both Gen. 21.18 and 1 Kgs 19.5, 7, tells the characters to ‘arise’ (קום). In Gen. 21.17, Hagar is asked, ‘What is it with you, Hagar?’ (מהילך הגר), while in 1 Kgs 19.9, 13, Elijah is asked, ‘What are you doing here, Elijah?’ (מהילך פה אליהו).¹²

2.2 Thematic and lexical parallels in Genesis 22 and 1 Kings 17–18

If 1 Kgs 19 alludes to Gen. 21, and if Gen. 22 has been editorially coordinated with Gen. 21, is it therefore possible that the earlier Elijah stories in chapters 17–18 contain allusions to Gen. 22? There are in fact a number of thematic parallels between these two texts. In both Gen. 22 and 1 Kgs 17, we see a parent with an only son whose life is threatened or lost and who is then restored to his parent. In both Gen. 22 and 1 Kgs 17–18, we see stories focusing on God’s ability to provide or respond: in the former instance, with the provision of a ram as a substitute and in the latter, with provision of food, revivification and rain. In both texts, something precious to the characters in the story is threatened: the life of Abraham’s promised son, Isaac (Gen. 22), the lives of a widow and her son during a drought (1 Kgs 17.11–14), the life of the widow’s son after he becomes sick (1 Kgs 17.17–18) and the life and safety of Obadiah (1 Kgs 18.8–14). In both texts, we see a test of the characters’ trust in Yhwh’s ability to provide or protect, and they respond either positively in belief or negatively in fear and doubt. In the second half of 1 Kgs 18, this test of belief is depicted as a contest and is set before Israel as a whole; at stake is the question of whether Baal or Yhwh is the God who lives. And like the test in Gen. 22, the contest in 1 Kgs 18 takes place on a mountain (Gen. 22.2 // 1 Kgs 18.20).

Lexical parallels also exist between the two texts.¹³ First, the introduction and conclusion of the two text-segments 1 Kgs 17.17–24 and Gen. 22.1–14 (excluding for the moment the *second* ‘conclusion’ of Gen. 22) contain the same locutions. Both begin

11. See Steck, 1968: 25, 27; White, 1975: 294–295; Gregory, 1990: 140–141; Noble, 2016: 35–36; McKenzie, 2018: 148. Rabbinic interpreters had already seen the connection: in *Bereshit Rabbah* 53, R. Meir identifies the bush (השיח) under which Hagar put Ishmael (Gen. 21.15) as a // רתם 1 Kgs 19.5).

12. It is true that both Gen. 21.17 and 1 Kgs 19.12–13 also share a reference to ‘hearing’ (שמע) a ‘sound’ (קול), but in 1 Kgs 19, these words are part of a larger constellation of terms alluding to the stories of Moses in the wilderness and at Sinai. See e.g. Fohrer, 1968: 55–58; Carlson, 1969: 431–438; Nordheim, 1978: 153–173; McKenzie, 1985: 211 n.19; Gregory, 1990: 144–146; Walsh, 1996: 284–289.

13. Many of the lexical parallels in 1 Kgs 17 were already noted by Hayun, 2019.

with ‘And it came about after these things’ (a locution that occurs only five times),¹⁴ and both end with ‘Now I know that you are . . .’ (a locution that occurs only in these two stories).¹⁵ Because beginnings and endings of information sequences are perceived as highly salient,¹⁶ these correspondences seem significant.

In 1 Kgs 17.9, Yhwh tells Elijah to go to Zarephath. As Garsiel (1991: 117) notes, ‘The place name “Zarephath” (*srpt* – צרפת) may be derived from *srp* (צרף). Literally this means “purify, refine”, but in many texts it has the applied sense of putting people on trial to prove their faith or loyalty (as in Jud 7:4; Ps 17:3; 66:10; Jer 9:6). Needless to say, this tacit MND [*midrashic name derivation*] is in harmony with the main theme of the episode under discussion.’ As the story unfolds, we in fact see multiple ‘tests’ of faith—in Chapter 17, the widow must first believe that Elijah’s God will provide food and then believe that he will revive her dead son. In Chapter 18, Obadiah must proclaim the arrival of Elijah despite his fear of Ahab, and subsequently the people are challenged to believe that Yhwh is the living God. The use of the word צרפת, then, corresponds to the statement in Gen. 22.1 that God ‘tested’ (נסה) Abraham.

Another locution that is shared by both texts is הניני, ‘Behold, I’ or ‘Here I am.’ While this occurs some 181 times in the Hebrew Bible, it is typically perceived as prominent in Gen. 22 because of its repetition in vv. 1, 7, 11.¹⁷ This locution is also found in the mouth of the widow in 1 Kgs 17.12, whereby in response to Elijah’s request to provide food, she replies, ‘Behold, I (הניני) am gathering two sticks.’¹⁸

In Gen. 22.2, we read: ויאמר קחינא (‘And he said, ‘Take . . .’). In 1 Kgs 17.10, 11, we see a virtually identical demand: ויאמר קחינא (‘And he said, ‘Take . . .’). What God requests from Abraham is his only son; what Elijah requests from the widow is her only food. The language of ‘taking’ a ‘son’ is then taken up and inverted in the next episode in which Elijah ‘takes’ the widow’s ‘son’ to revive him and give him back to the widow (1 Kgs 17.19, 23).

After Elijah’s request for food, the widow tells him that she is gathering עצים ‘wood’ (1 Kgs 17.12; cf. v. 10) on which to cook the last of her food. This is of course what Abraham brings in order to offer Isaac as a burnt offering, a word repeated in Gen. 22.3, 6, 7, 9. The word is also repeated and expanded in 1 Kgs 18.23 as העצים ואש ‘the wood and the fire’, which appears to be an inversion of Gen. 22.7 האש והעצים ‘the fire and the wood’. Finally, the series of events described in Gen. 22.9 is strongly paralleled in 1 Kgs 18.32–33:

ויבן שם אברהם את־המזבח ויערך את־העצים . . . וישם אתו . . . ממעל לעצים
‘And there Abraham built the altar and he arranged the wood . . . and he placed him . . . above
the wood’ (Gen. 22.9)

14. The locution והיה אחר הדברים האלה is attested in Gen. 22.1; 39.7; 40.1; 1 Kgs 17.17; 21.1. A variation using אחרי instead of אחר occurs only in Gen. 22.20; 48.1; Josh. 24.29.

15. The locution אתה . . . ידעתי כי . . . אתה occurs only in Gen. 22.12; 1 Kgs 17.24.

16. On the ‘serial position effect’ (the bias towards recalling the initial and final items in a series), see Deese and Kaufman, 1957: 180–187; Crowder, 2015: 441–442; Colman, 2015: 688.

17. On the repetition and structural features in Gen. 22, see Wenham, 1994: 101.

18. Note that the form of the rare word ‘gathering’ (מקששת) [8x] is graphically and aurally similar to the word קשת ‘bow’ in Gen. 21.16, 20.

ויבנה את־האבנים מזבח . . . ויערך את־העצים . . . וישם על־העצים

‘And he built an altar with the stones . . . and he arranged the wood . . . and he placed upon the wood’ (1 Kgs 18.32–33)

One of the most significant locutions for the plot in Gen. 22 occurs in v. 2: והעלהו שם לעלה ‘and offer him up there as a burnt offering’. The word ‘burnt offering’ (עֹלָה) is then repeated in vv. 3, 6, 7. Significantly, forms from the root על־ה are repeated numerous times in various forms throughout 1 Kgs 17–18: the word עֹלָה ‘burnt offering’ occurs twice;¹⁹ the verb עלה ‘go up/bring up’ occurs ten times;²⁰ the word עֲלִיָּה ‘upper room’ occurs twice;²¹ and the word תְּעָלָה ‘watercourse’ occurs three times.²² The pervasive repetition focuses attention on these related lexemes. In light of this, the following parallel seems particularly significant:

קח־נא את־בנך . . . והעלהו . . . לעלה

‘Take your son . . . and offer him up . . . as a burnt offering’ (Gen. 22.2)

ויקחהו . . . ויעלהו אלי־העליה

‘And he took him . . . and he brought him up to the upper room’ (1 Kgs 17.19)

In Gen. 22.4, Abraham sees the place from a distance ‘on the third day’—a temporal descriptor that Westermann (1985: 358) treats as a motif associated with ‘preparation for more important events’, but that Steins (1999: 170) treats as a more specific link to the Sinai narrative in Exod. 19.²³ This temporal element seems to be transformed in a variety of ways in the Elijah narrative: in 1 Kgs 17.21, Elijah stretches himself out on the child ‘three times’ (שְׁלֹשׁ פְּעָמִים); in 1 Kgs 18.1, the word of Yhwh comes to Elijah ‘in the third year’ (בְּשָׁנָה הַשְּׁלִישִׁית), telling him to reveal himself to Ahab; and in 1 Kgs 18.34, Elijah commands water to be poured on the offering and the wood ‘a third time’ (שְׁלֹשׁ). In all these instances there is an element of suspense or uncertainty about the outcome of events.

For the sons in both stories, there is a movement from the threat of death (or actual death) back to life. The resolution of this threat in each case is linked to the expression ‘obeyed the voice’ (שָׁמַע בְּקוֹל), This expression is used of Abraham in Gen. 22.18, but is also used to describe Yhwh’s response to Elijah’s prayer regarding the widow’s son in 1 Kgs 17.22. This constitutes an inversion: though in Gen. 22 Abraham’s ‘listening’ is an *expression of his trust*, here in 1 Kgs 17 Yhwh’s ‘listening’ is a *response to Elijah’s trust*.

As we have already seen, the parallels to Gen. 22 continue into 1 Kgs 18. One of the prominent features of Gen. 22 is the repetition of the locution ‘and the two of them went on together’ (וּלְכוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם יַחְדָּו), vv. 6, 8). In 1 Kgs 18.6, this expression seems to be inverted: before Elijah meets Obadiah, we are told that ‘Ahab *went on one road all by himself*, and Obadiah *went on one road all by himself*’ (אֲחָאָב הֵלךְ בְּדֶרֶךְ אַחַר לְבָדּוֹ)

19. 1 Kgs 18.34, 38.

20. 1 Kgs 17.19; 18.29, 36, 41, 42 [2x], 43 [2x], 44 [2x].

21. 1 Kgs 17.19, 23.

22. 1 Kgs 18.32, 35, 38.

23. See Gen. 22.4 // Exod. 19.11, 16.

(ועבדיהו הלך בדרך-אחד לבדו). We are also told that Obadiah ‘was fearing Yhwh greatly’ (1 Kgs 18.3b) when he provided for the endangered prophets – the same evaluation given of Abraham in Gen. 22.12.²⁴ The question as we continue reading (1 Kgs 18.7–16) is whether Obadiah will again fear God by risking Ahab’s wrath in order to announce Elijah. The announcement that Elijah requests of Obadiah (vv. 8, 11, 14) amounts to a confession of faith: ‘Behold, “my God is Yhwh”’ (הנה אליהו).

As I noted above, the description of Elijah’s altar building and preparation in 1 Kgs 18.32–33 is a very close parallel to that of Gen. 22.9. Verse 32 also contains the word ‘seed’ (זרע), a word found in Gen. 22.17. The rationale for the reference to the ‘watercourse’ (תעלה, see the comments above) and the ‘seed’ in the contest on Carmel is to make the contest more difficult for Elijah and Yhwh and to heighten the challenge for the people to believe. We might dismiss the words תעלה and זרע as insignificant verbal parallels were it not for an incongruity: the watercourse around the altar is described in v. 32 as large enough to hold ‘two measures of seed (סאתים זרע)’. But why describe a trench about to be filled with water (vv. 34–35) with an expression for *dry* measure, rather than using הין or בת (the usual terms for wet measure)? It is possible that this incongruity is designed to underscore the verbal parallel to the test in Gen. 22, where Abraham’s faith results in a renewed promise concerning his ‘seed’. Curiously, the word ‘watercourse’ (תעלה) is also taken up in 2 Kgs 18, another story in which a character’s trust in Yhwh is tested.²⁵

When Elijah stands at the altar, he prays: ‘Let it be known that . . . at your word *I did all these things*’ (1 Kgs 18.36) – a statement that is similar to God’s evaluation of Abraham in Gen. 22.16, ‘Because *you did this thing*.’ And while in Gen. 22.10 Abraham was prevented from ‘slaughtering’ (שחט) his son, 1 Kgs 18.40 describes Elijah ‘slaughtering’ the prophets of Baal (וישחטם) after Yhwh responds with fire.²⁶

Finally, in 1 Kgs 18.43, a servant (נער) belonging to Elijah appears – out of nowhere! – and is instructed to go up to the top of the mountain and look towards the sea while Elijah remains below. The servant reports back: אין מאומה ‘there is not anything.’ This seems to be an inversion of components from Gen. 22.3–4, in which Abraham brings two of his servants (נערים) on the journey and then instructs them to wait so he and Isaac can

24. References to ‘fearing’ Yhwh are surprisingly rare in 1–2 Kings; they occur in the temple dedication prayer in 1 Kgs 8.40–41; with reference to Obadiah in 1 Kgs 18.3, 12; to the dead husband of the woman in 2 Kgs 4.1; and in a cluster of occurrences referring to acts of religious devotion in 2 Kgs 17.25, 28, 32–34, 36, 39, 41.

25. The rare word ‘watercourse’ (תעלה, 11x) occurs in 2 Kgs 18.17, introducing a story in which Hezekiah’s trust in Yhwh’s ability to provide is being tested (2 Kgs 18.17–19.37). From here the word is again taken up and used in Isa. 7.3 // 36.2 (see further the linkages in Isa. 7.1–3 // 36.1–2; 7.4 // 37.6; 7.11 // 37.30); these episodes compare and contrast Ahaz and Hezekiah and form a pair of editorially coordinated stories in which the faith of both kings is tested. See Ackroyd, 1982: 16–20; Kaiser, 1983: 143–148; Becker, 1997: 28–30, 47–60; Oswald, 2008: 201–220; Williamson, 2018: 103–105; Stromberg, 2020: 81–102.

26. The verb שחט occurs six times in 1–2 Kings (1 Kgs 10.16, 17; 18.40; 2 Kgs 10.7, 14; 25.7) and 86 times in the corpus of the Hebrew Bible.

go up the mountain. Then just as Abraham is about to slaughter his son, in v. 12 the angel stops him, saying, אֲל־תַּעַשׂ לוֹ מְאוֹמָה ‘do not do anything to him.’²⁷

One additional line of evidence that suggests these parallels are not accidental but rather part of a larger deliberate literary strategy is the relationship between the Elijah and Elisha narratives. First, a number of authors have identified allusions to Gen. 18; 21–22 in 2 Kgs 4.8–37, the story of Elisha and the Shunamite woman. Like Sarah, this woman is barren in her old age, receives the promise of a child, and experiences the birth of the promised child; like Isaac, the child’s life is threatened, but his life is rescued, and he is given back to his parent.²⁸ Second, 1 Kgs 17 seems to have been composed in light of 2 Kgs 4: both Elijah and Elisha miraculously provide food and raise a woman’s dead son, and the lexical and thematic links between these two chapters are very strong.²⁹ The function of these narrative analogies between the stories of the two prophets is to depict Elisha as the successor to Elijah (2 Kgs 2.9–15): Elisha is empowered by the same spirit and performs the same miracles. This being the case, it might make sense that allusions to Genesis in 2 Kgs 4 would show up in 1 Kgs 17. However, the parallels to Gen. 21–22 that we see in 1 Kgs 17 include several elements *not* found in 2 Kgs 4³⁰ and do not include all the elements that *are* found in 2 Kgs 4.³¹ This suggests that the parallels in 1 Kgs 17 are independent allusions to Gen. 22 and not just elements mechanically taken over from 2 Kgs 4.

3.0 Evaluating the thematic and lexical parallels

3.1 *The parallels as allusions*

Is it possible that the parallels noted above constitute a case of allusion?³² Though it is true that most of the shared words are quite common, it is generally acknowledged that

27. For a similar inversion of the components in Gen. 22, see Judg. 19.3 (which turns the one donkey and two servants of Gen. 22.3 into *one* servant and *two* donkeys).

28. See Levenson, 1993: 224; Simon, 1997: 253–255; Sharon, 2002: 58 n.32; Hepner, 2010: 387–400 (though I disagree with Hepner that 1 Kgs 4 is a ‘polemic against prophetism’ and that Elisha is depicted as fathering a child with the Shunamite); Rosenberg, 2020: 701–720. Note the reading of LXX^L 4 Rgns/2 Kgs 4.16 *μη εγκατασση* = אֲל תצוק (cf. MT אל תזוב = LXX^B *μη διαψεύση*); the scribe has seen and made even more explicit the connection between the Shunamite in 2 Kgs 4 and Sarah in Gen. 18; 21 by punning on Isaac’s name. On this, see McKenzie, 2018: 277.

29. See e.g. Levine, 1999: 25–46. Most would argue that with respect to the text’s compositional history, 2 Kgs 4 has priority; see Blum, 1997: 278–79; McKenzie, 2018: 99–101.

30. E.g. the introductory statement ‘And it came about after these things’ in Gen. 22.1 // 1 Kgs 17.17; the wood (עֵצִים) in Gen. 22.3, 6, 7, 9 // 1 Kgs 17.12; 18.32–33; the reference to ‘taking’ the ‘son’ in Gen. 22.2 // 1 Kgs 17.19.

31. E.g. the saddling of the donkey and the accompaniment by the servant(s) in Gen. 22.3 // 2 Kgs 4.24.

32. Here I am using ‘allusion’ to refer to instances of text referencing that borrow something from a source text, but do not employ attribution in an effort to call attention to the act of referencing, to the speaker or author of the quoted material or to the source being referenced. Space

alluding authors can borrow even common words³³ and minimal elements³⁴ and that such borrowings can be distinguished from coincidental similarities, particularly when they form a constellation of shared words³⁵ and when they are accompanied by a sequence of shared motifs or patterns (of plot, character, etc.).³⁶ Moreover, the kinds of lexical parallels noted above are no different from the allusions to Gen. 22 that others have already noted in Numbers, Judges, 1 Samuel, 1 Kings, and Job.

3.2 The direction of dependence and the dating of the texts

If the lexical and thematic parallels between Gen. 21–22 and 1 Kgs 17–19 are to be understood as allusions, what is the direction of literary dependence? As I noted above, there is a consensus that 1 Kings 19 is drawing on Gen. 21. But what about the relationship of 1 Kgs 17–18 to Gen. 22 and the dating of Gen. 22? Earlier commentators typically gave Gen. 22.1–14, 19 a pre-exilic date, assigning these verses to the Elohist source.³⁷ Many now favour a post-exilic date.³⁸ But even supposing a post-exilic date for Gen. 22, a number of scholars have also dated 1 Kgs 17–19 to the Persian period, so it is certainly possible that the author had access to Gen. 22.³⁹ Although stories about the prophet Elijah may have existed earlier in a different shape,⁴⁰ the narratives as we now have them in the book of Kings are very much a literary product: they have been tied to the book's argument about the downfall of the houses of Jeroboam, Baasha, and Ahab and the downfall of Jezebel,⁴¹ and the presentation of Elijah has been patterned on Moses and in coordination with Elisha.⁴² More significant for the question of literary dependence is the nature of the content in each story: it seems less likely that the author of Gen. 22 took his ideas from 1 Kgs 17–19 than the reverse. As I noted above, a number of features in 1 Kgs 17–19 can be explained as transformations and inversions of, and

does not permit an analysis using the narrower definition of allusion described by Ben-Porat, 1976: 105–128.

33. Leonard, 2008: 251.

34. As Alter notes, 'The marker for the allusion may be as economical as a single unusual or strategically placed word'; see Alter, 1990: 118.

35. Sommer, 1996: 485: 'The argument that an author alludes, then, is a cumulative one: assertions that allusions occur in certain passages become stronger as patterns emerge from those allusions.' See also Sommer, 1998: 5, 72; Leonard, 2008: 253–255.

36. Sommer, 1998: 11; Kelly, 2017: 22–40. See also Leonard, 2017: 97, 'in cases of narrative tracking, shared terminology may sometimes signal an allusion; more important, though, are narrative parallels that highlight one text's reliance on another'.

37. See e.g. Von Rad, 1972: 238, 242; so still Kalimi, 2002: 9–11, 14.

38. See e.g. Veijola, 1988: 155; Steins, 1999: 217–24 (see also 133–213); Schmid, 2005: 271–300 (esp. 297–298); Schmid, 2008: 268–276 (esp. 273–275). For differing perspectives on the stratification of Gen. 22, see Moberly, 1988: 302–323; Van Seters, 1992: 261–264; Carr, 1996: 152–59, 172; Boehm, 2002: 1–12.

39. For the possibility of a post-exilic dating for 1 Kgs 17–19, see Blum, 1997: 290–292; Otto, 2003: 487–508; McKenzie, 2014: 92–110 (esp. 102–105, 108, 110).

40. See Rofé, 1988: 183, 187–92; Long, 1984: 181–183, 186–187, 190, 195–196.

41. See 1 Kgs 14.1–17; 15.28–30; 16.1–4, 30–33; 18.17–18; 21.21–26; 2 Kgs 9.35–37; 10.10, 17.

42. See the sources cited in the footnotes above.

word-play on, elements in Gen. 21–22. Furthermore, the motif of testing in the Elijah narratives is implicit rather than explicit and seems more likely to be derivative. The argument that Gen. 22 was composed in relation to Gen. 21 and to the Sinai narrative seems to account for Gen. 22's contents in a way that the Elijah narratives do not.⁴³

3.3 *The rhetorical function of the allusions in 1 Kings 17–19 to Genesis 21–22*

It is significant that the allusions in the Elijah narratives are to the *pair* of already connected stories in Gen. 21–22. We see the same technique in Judg. 11, wherein the description of Jephthah's banishment (Judg. 11.1–2) is based on the description of Hagar's banishment (Gen. 21.9–10), whereas the story of the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter (Judg. 11.30–39) is an inversion of what happens to Isaac in Gen. 22. Obviously, one of the distinctive motifs supplied by Gen. 21 for the Elijah story is the provision of water when it runs out; this serves as the context for the themes of divine provision during the drought in 1 Kgs 17–18. And one of the distinctive motifs of Gen. 22 is the offering; language connected with this motif is taken up in 1 Kgs 17–18.

But if all these verbal and thematic parallels constitute allusions, then what is their rhetorical function? It seems that they were designed to prompt the reader to compare and contrast the stories in Gen. 21–22 with the episodes in 1 Kgs 17–19. In doing so, we find two themes are being highlighted, namely, the theme of divine provision, and the theme of faith and its testing. The theme of divine provision is clearly present in the Hagar and Ishmael story. Here God rescues the boy and his mother by supplying water in the wilderness (21.14–19). Afterwards, God is 'with the boy' (v. 20) because he has promised to make a great nation from him (21.13, 18). The theme of divine provision continues into Gen. 20, where God prevents Abraham from sacrificing his son and provides a ram in his place (20.12–14). In these two chapters, the theme of divine provision is underscored by the repetition of and wordplay on the verb ראה 'to see' (Gen. 21.16, 19; 22.4, 8, 13, 14; cf. 16.13, 14).⁴⁴ This theme of divine provision is also prominent in the Elijah narratives: Yhwh provides food for Elijah in the wilderness (1 Kgs 17.2–6), provides food for the widow and her son (17.8–16), restores the life of the widow's son at the request of Elijah (17.17–24; see esp. v. 22), provides food for the endangered prophets through Obadiah (18.3b–4), sends rain to end the drought (18.1, 45), and provides food for Elijah in the wilderness (19.4–8). Here too the theme of provision is underscored by the repetition of keywords, in this case, the verbs כיל 'to provide' (1 Kgs 17.4, 9; 18.4, 13) and ענה 'to answer' (18.24, 26, 29, 37).

The second theme is the need for faith, which is repeatedly being tested in these stories. When read in light of Gen. 16, Gen. 21 can be understood as a test of Hagar's faith in God's ability to provide.⁴⁵ After Hagar acknowledged God's ability to provide

43. See Moberly, 1988: 304–305; Steins, 1999: 163–186.

44. See also Gen. 22.2, where Abraham is commanded to 'go to the land of Moriah' (MT מריה); some textual witnesses take this name as related to the verb 'to see' (המוראה גג; σ' της σπτασας; Vg *visionis*).

45. As before, Hagar suffers because of Sarah's harsh treatment (Gen. 16.6 // 21.10); Hagar is in the wilderness (16.7 // 21.14); she is found by an angel at a water source (16.7 // 21.17,

when in distress (Gen. 16.13), we might expect her to do the same when she again finds herself in the very same situation – though here in 21.15–16, she loses all hope. The reader is explicitly told that God’s command to Abraham in Gen. 22.1–2 is a ‘test’, the nature of which involves an apparent threat to God’s promises made earlier (Gen. 13.16; 15.4–6; 17.19; 18.10–15; 21.1–3). Likewise, in 1 Kgs 17.8–16, the widow must believe that Yhwh will provide food – and initially she acts in faith on Elijah’s prophetic word (vv. 13–15).⁴⁶ But when the widow’s son becomes sick and dies (1 Kgs 17.17), and she is again faced with the choice of trusting Elijah and his God, she instead accuses him of causing the death of her son (despite the fact that the miraculous provision of food is still occurring!). Her comment in v. 24 is ironic; after all, she had earlier believed that Elijah was a man of God and that he spoke the word of Yhwh (vv. 13–15). In 1 Kgs 18.8–14, Obadiah must believe that Elijah will show himself to Ahab (after all, in vv. 4, 13, we are told that Obadiah has risked his life before to save the prophets). But this time Obadiah responds in fear and obeys only when Elijah swears an oath to him.⁴⁷ According to 1 Kgs 18.21, Israel has been unfaithful. Now they are given a new test of faith in 1 Kgs 18.22–24; will they believe that Yhwh will respond with fire and that he (and not Baal) is the living God? Finally, Elijah is depicted as having a crisis of belief in 1 Kgs 19: he is afraid⁴⁸ and runs for his life (v. 3); he lies down and wishes to die (v. 4). He believes he has been very zealous for Yhwh but all in vain (v. 10). This response strikes the reader as unusual given Elijah’s previous confidence as Yhwh’s agent and his trust that Yhwh would provide (17.14, 21; 18.36–37).

These stories all examine the actions of characters in crisis: will they respond in faith, believing that Yhwh will provide? This repeated pattern seems designed to provoke (self-)reflection on the part of the reader/hearer of these stories. We might compare this rhetorical strategy to what we see in Ps 78.1–64 (though obviously this psalm highlights Yhwh’s judgment on those who fail to believe in a way that 1 Kgs 17–19 does not).

4.0 Conclusion: Genesis 22 as a ‘template’ for later narratives

In an essay on the reception history of the angel motif in the Aqedah, Bernstein (2000: 266) states, ‘It is remarkable that, in light of the importance of the Aqedah in second temple Jewish literature and in subsequent Jewish thought, the text or story of the Aqedah plays virtually no role in the Hebrew Bible after Genesis 22. Despite the kind of *literary* allusion, for which J. Unterman, for example, has argued . . . the rich *theological* and *ideological* aspects of the Aqedah seem to have left no mark on the early portions of the Hebrew Bible.’ It seems to me, however, that the number of intertexts (including

19); there is a promise about her offspring (16.10 // 21.13, 18); there is a reference to God’s ‘hearing’ and a wordplay on the name ‘Ishmael’ (16.11 // 21.17; note the careful omission of the name ‘Ishmael’ in Gen. 21!); there is repetition of the verb *ראה* to underscore the theme of divine provision (16.13, 14 // 21.16, 19).

46. On 1 Kgs 17.8–16 as depicting a ‘test’ of the widow’s character, see Rofé, 1988: 132–133.

47. Note that the reader is made to question Obadiah’s loyalty by the ‘my lord’ / ‘your lord’ interchange (vv. 7–8).

48. LXX 3 Rgns/1 Kgs 19.3 και ἐφοβήθη = *ירא*.

the one I have just described) that creatively draw upon Gen. 22 might prompt us to re-evaluate Bernstein's conclusion. I would suggest that Gen. 22 *has* left its mark on texts in the Hebrew Bible and that 'literary allusion' – in the form of narrative analogy – *is* the mechanism through which these texts draw upon and explore the 'rich theological and ideological aspects' of Gen. 22.

First, a number of scholars have explained Gen. 22 in light of the Sinai narrative, arguing that the Aqedah was placed at the beginning of Israel's story so that readers would reflect on Moses' and Israel's actions at Sinai in light of Abraham's actions at 'one of the mountains' in the land of Moriah.⁴⁹ The literary connections between these narratives are a means of exploring concepts that became fundamental to Israelite identity: namely, the importance of divine and human faithfulness, the idea of testing, and the significance of substitution and sacrifice. As Steins (1999: 237–238) has demonstrated, 'The story about Abraham's obedience and his whole burnt-offering on a mountain in the land of Moriah is a *Sinaiprolepse* (anticipation of the Sinai pericope): The story anticipates, via the experience of Abraham what the people of Israel will undergo on Mount Sinai, namely, the presence of God in the obedience of the Torah and in the ritual of the whole burnt-offering (i.e. the whole of cultic worship), respectively.'

Second, in light of the number of other texts alluding to Gen. 22 that I noted above (e.g. Num. 22–24; Judg. 11; 19; 1 Sam. 17–24; 1 Kgs 3.16–28; 17–18; Job 1–2), it seems to me that we have good reason for describing Gen. 22 as a 'template' for the composition and/or redaction of other stories. This process continued through the Second Temple period and beyond.⁵⁰ Scribes read Gen. 22 paradigmatically, depicting other characters in comparison or contrast to Abraham;⁵¹ in some cases, they drew on the story of Hagar in Gen. 21 as well. The roles occupied by Abraham and Isaac in Gen. 22 could be mapped onto other characters in a variety of ways. This kind of literary activity – in which texts

49. On the connections between Gen. 22 and Exod. 19–24, see Moberly, 1988: 304–305; Steins, 1999: 163–186. Moberly explains the similarities by attributing Gen. 22 and the Sinai complex to the same editorial hand, whereas Steins argues that the author of Gen. 22 alluded to Exod. 2.23–5.5; 19; 20; 24. Others take Exodus as the borrowing text; see Miller, 2012: 247–252. Compare e.g. Gen. 22.1 (והאלהים נסה) // Exod. 20.20 (ולבעבור נסות אתכם בא האלהים); Gen. 22.2 (לעלה . . . והעלהו) // Exod. 24.5 (ויעלו עלת); Gen. 22.3 // Exod. 24.4 (וישכם בבקר); Gen. 22.3 // Exod. 24.5 (ונערים); Gen. 22.4 // Exod. 19.11, 16 (ויום השלישי); Gen. 22.10 // Exod. 24.5 (וישלח); Gen. 22.12 (עתה ידעתי כי ירא אלהים אתה) // Exod. 20.20 (ובעבור תהיה יראתו) (על־פניכם).

50. For allusions to the Aqedah in later Second Temple-period Jewish literature, see Gen. 22.6, 8 // Tobit 6.6 LXX^s, 4Q197 4.I.11; Gen. 22.1, 6–8, 13 // *Apoc. Abr.* 9.1–2, 12.1–7; on these, see Novick, 2007: 755–764. For allusions in early Christian literature, see e.g. Jn 3.16, Rom. 8.32, and the Gospel of Matthew. On the latter, see Huizenga, 2009: 129–187, 237–261; see also De Andrade, 2013.

51. For e.g. Judges 11 as a story of *unbelief*, see Tribble, 1984: 96, 'But Jephthah himself does not evince the assurance that the spirit of Yahweh ought to give. Rather than acting with conviction and courage, he responds with doubt and demand. At the very center (11:30–31) of the battle episode, he disrupts the narration (11:29, 32–33) to make yet another bargain. . . . The chosen saviour, endowed with the spirit of Yahweh, is nevertheless unsure of divine help and insecure about his future among those who had once rejected him. Therefore, he implores the deity, "if you will really give the Ammonites into my hand . . ."'

were coordinated with other texts, in which characters were depicted as exemplars, and in which the importance of trusting Yhwh to provide became a matter of reflection – can be found in other biblical compositions.⁵²

Third, the significance of analogy (and in this case, narrative analogy) for the construction of argument strategies in ancient Israelite literature cannot be overstated.⁵³ Recent studies have demonstrated the extent to which the characters and plot sequences of narratives have been patterned on earlier narratives.⁵⁴ This should come as no surprise given that repetition and correspondence are some of the most fundamental of all Israelite literary conventions, appearing on all literary levels.⁵⁵ It stands to reason, then, that reading any given intertext of Gen. 22 alongside its other intertexts can sharpen our perception of how analogies are being constructed to shape the argument. It seems appropriate to conclude with an observation by Yair Zakovitch (1993: 151–152):

[T]he biblical narrators did not function in a cultural-literary vacuum but constructed their stories in a dialogue with existing compositions known to their audience. The narrators propound a riddle to their readers, from whom they expect a high level of sophistication—a reader who absorbs the links and discerns the relationships between stories and their sources and who will take note of the contrasts between protagonists of the stories.

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52. For examples, see the coordination of Isa. 7 with Isa. 36–39 (and the comparison and contrast between Ahaz and Hezekiah as models of faith or lack of faith), or 2 Chron. 20.1–30 (and its use of Exod. 14.10–14 and Isa. 7.9, along with the presentation of Jehoshaphat as a model of faith). For other studies analysing texts concerned with the theme of ‘belief’, see Schmitt, 1982: 170–189; Rudnig-Zelt, 2017.
53. See Koenig, 1982: 379–383.
54. See Fisch, 1982: 425–437; Gordon, 1988: 69–80; Zakovitch, 1993: 139–152; Ho, 1999: 514–531; Berman, 2004; Berger, 2009: 433–452; Grossman, 2009: 394–414; Shalom-Guy, 2016: 1–29; Teeter (forthcoming 2021).
55. See e.g. Berlin, 1985; Sternberg, 1985: 365–440; Walsh, 2001: 145–154; Watson, 2005: 222–225, 273–279.

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