

## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1

#### Summary of Methodology

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- Story Outline
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*Setting:* spatial; temporal; social

*Events:* narrative tension and conflict; narrative time

- Discourse Analysis

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coda; repetition: Leitwort, motif, theme

*Ambiguity, Irony and Paradox*

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## Appendix 2

### A Semi-literal Translation of the Story of Lot's Daughters in Genesis 19

The two messengers (*mal'akiym* מלאכים) came to Sodom in the evening as Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. Lot saw them and got up to meet them. He bowed, his face to the ground (vs. 1), and said, “Look! I beg you my lords (*adonay* אדוני), please turn aside at the house of your servant; stay the night and bathe your feet. Then you can get up early and go on your way.” But they said, “No, really, we will stay the night in the plaza (*r<sup>e</sup>chov* רחוב)” (vs. 2). Still he urged them strongly, so they turned aside to him, and they went into his house. He prepared a banquet for them, baked un-leavened bread, and they ate (vs. 3).

Before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom surrounded the house; both young and old, all the people to the last man (vs. 4). They called to Lot saying to him, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out so we may know (*yada* ‘ ידע) them” (vs. 5). Lot went out to them over the threshold and shut the door (*deleth* דלת) behind him. (vs. 6) Then he said, “I beg you my brothers, do not do evil (*hip 'iy* of *ra 'a* ‘ רעע) (vs. 7). Look, please, I have two daughters (*banoth* בנות) who have not known (*yada* ‘ ידע) a man. Please, let me bring them out to you, and do to them whatever is good (*tob* טוב) in your eyes. Only to these men do nothing, because they have come under the shelter of my roof” (vs. 8). But they said, “Step back!” Then they said, “This one came to sojourn, and he wants to be judge! Now we will do more evil to you than with them.” And they pressed against the man, hard against Lot, and drew near to break down the door (vs. 9). Then the men stretched out their hands and brought Lot to them, into the house, and shut the door (vs. 10). And the men who were at the threshold of the house, both small and great, they struck with dazzling light (*sanveriyim* סנוריים), so that they grew weary in finding the threshold (vs. 11).

Then the men said to Lot, “Have you here a son-in-law, your sons and your daughters? All who are yours in the city bring out from the place (vs. 12), because we are destroying this place. For their outcry has become great before YHWH, and YHWH has sent us to destroy it” (vs. 13). So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law who were taking (marrying) his daughters, and he said, “Get up! Get out of this place, because YHWH is about to destroy the city.” But he was joking in the eyes of his sons-in-law (vs. 14).

When the dawn came, the messengers urged Lot, “Get up! Take your wife and your two daughters who are found here, so that you are not swept away in the punishment of the city.” (vs.15) But he lingered. So the men seized him by his hand, and his wife’s hand and the hands of his two daughters, for YHWH’s compassion/pity/warmth (*chumlah* חַמְלָה) was with him. They brought him out and made him rest (*hip ‘iyl* of *nuch* נוּחַ) outside the city (vs. 16).

And so it was, when they had brought them outside, he said, “Flee (*nip ‘al* of *malat* מָלַט) for your life. Do not look behind you, and do not stop moving anywhere on the plains. Escape (*nus* נָוַס) to the mountain or you will be swept away” (vs. 17). But Lot said to them, “I beg you, no, my lords (vs. 18). Look, your servant has found favour in your eyes, and you have shown your great loving kindness (*chesed* חֶסֶד) which you have done for me by preserving (*hip ‘iyl* inf. constr. of *chayah* חָיָה) my life. But I am unable to flee to the mountain in case the evil/disaster (*hara ‘ah* הָרַעָה) pursues me, and I die (vs. 19). Look, this city is near (enough) to escape there. It is small. Please let me flee there. Is it not small? And I myself (*nephesh* נַפְשׁ) shall live (*qal* impf. of *chayah* חָיָה)” (vs. 20). Then he said to him, “Look, I have also granted to you this thing: I will certainly not overthrow the city of which you have spoken (vs. 21). Quickly! Flee there, because I am not able to do a thing until you arrive there.” Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar (insignificance) (vs. 22).

The sun had risen over the land when Lot came to Zoar (vs. 23). And YHWH caused sulphur and fire from YHWH to rain out of the heavens onto Sodom and onto Gomorrah (vs. 24). He destroyed these cities, all the area, all the inhabitants of the cities, and the growth of the ground (vs.25). His wife looked (*hip'iy* of *nabat* נבט) behind him, and she became a pillar of salt (vs. 26).

Early in the morning, Abraham went to the place where he had stood before the Lord (vs. 27). He looked down towards Sodom and Gomorrah and towards all the land of the Ghor Valley. And he saw and look! The smoke of the land went up like the smoke of the furnace (vs. 28). So it was when God (*'elohim* אלהים) destroyed the cities of the broad valley, God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out of the midst of the destruction when he destroyed the cities in which Lot lived (vs. 29).

Then Lot went up from Zoar, and lived (*yashab* ישב) in the mountain, his two daughters with him, because he feared to live in Zoar. He lived in the cave, he and his two daughters (vs. 30). The firstborn (*b<sup>e</sup>kiyrah* בכירה) said to the younger (*ts<sup>e</sup>'iyrah* צעירה), “Our father is old, and there is not a man in the land to come in to us as is the way of all the earth (vs. 31). Come (imperative of *halak* הלך), let us make our father drink wine. Then we will lie with him, and we will preserve life (piel imperf. of *chayah* חיה) through our father’s seed (*zara* זרע)” (vs. 32). So they made their father drink wine that night, and the firstborn went in and lay (with) her father. He did not know when she lay (down) or when she got up (vs. 33). And it was on the next day that the firstborn said to the younger, “Look, yesterday evening I lay (with) my father. Let us make (him) drink wine tonight also. Then you go in, lie with him, and we will preserve life through our father’s seed” (vs. 34). They made him drink wine that night also. Then the younger got up and lay with him. He did not know when she lay (down) or when she got up (vs. 35).

Thus the two daughters of Lot became pregnant to their father (vs. 36). The firstborn gave birth to a son, and she called his name Moab. He is the father of Moab to this day (vs. 37). And the younger, she also gave birth to a son and called his name Ben-ammi. He is the father of the sons of Ammon to this day (vs. 38).

### **Appendix 3**

#### **Bekirah bat Lot: A Midrash**

I am Bekirah, and I wait with my mother Netsiv and my younger sister Tsirah<sup>1</sup> for our father Lot to return home. It is already dark, the lamp is lit, and Father is inexplicably absent. His meal awaits his return: we have already eaten ours. Then we hear him at the door, but he is not alone. I feel a thrill of fear: Father never comes home with other men. They enter - Father and two strangers. We three women remain in the shadows, but I can see the men in the lamplight. The strangers seem ordinary, but not ordinary. It is all very peculiar. I feel nervous, excited and curious all at once. I think Tsirah is afraid - I feel her shiver as she clutches my arm.

Unobtrusively Netsiv moves into the darkness of the adjoining room and we follow. Now I start to question. Has Father gone out of his mind? How can he think of bringing guests home when he knows very well that he has no right to do so? Although Tsirah and I are now betrothed to Mother's cousins, Mother says that since Father is an alien he cannot be accepted by the citizens of this city. Perhaps he will have a measure of acceptance if he becomes the grandfather of boys born in Sodom. But meanwhile if anyone finds out that he has guests here, there will be trouble. At least it was dark before he brought them in, so there's a chance he was not seen with them.

Mother is anxious and does not want to show herself, so Father has to prepare extra food for the guests. He is hurriedly making flat bread, so that means he wants the men to bed down soon in order to leave the city early. Why did he invite them here in the first place? But I believe I know the answer: there is something different about these two, and Father understands all about being different.

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<sup>1</sup> Netsiv means to 'stand firm' and is from the verb 'pillar' (*nip'al* of *ntsb* נִצַּב). Tsirah is from *ts'iyrah* (צִיְרָה), the feminine of 'small/smaller' or 'young/younger.'

What's that? Tsirah was the first to jerk her head to a sound which is soon evident to us all. It is the dull rhythm of feet moving fast along the hard earthen paths between the buildings, and it is the sound of rumbling voices. The sound grows louder, but nothing prepares me for the eruption of voices roaring outside our door. It seems as though every man in the city is out there! Then someone raises his voice above the hubbub, and I recognise it as that of one of the city elders. His call for Father to bring out the visitors fills me with cold dread. I cannot see anything, but the background rumbling is menacing: the men are here to humiliate the strangers and punish Father. I find that I am trembling in shock. I am also starkly aware of how heavily the odds are stacked against us: three men and three women versus a large and angry crowd.

Father goes outside without the men, and I hold my breath and listen. Father's words knife into the now-dead silence. "How brave he is!" I whisper into my sister's ear. But within moments we three are clinging together and slipping to the floor in a huddle of abject terror. Every hair on my body prickles. I cannot believe what I have just heard! Did our father really say that the mob could have us, his own girls? Did he really say they could do whatever they want with us? Mother closes her eyes and utters a long, low moan while Tsirah's grip loosens on my arm. She has fainted. I am in the grip of utter horror and panic, unable to breathe. Vomit rises in my throat and I choke.

Suddenly chaos erupts outside: the noise is tremendous. The door opens and simultaneously there is a tremendous flash and crash, immediately followed by other crashes, thumps and anguished cries in the street. My head feels like it is about to split apart! These strangers have wrought some magic: another source of terror! Every moment seems like it will be our last as Netsiv, Tsirah and I lie in a trembling heap on the floor.

Without knowing how it happened, we are back in the main room. Incredibly Lot is also here with his face bruised, but alive; the strangers are behind us in the shadows. The door is shut, and the noise outside is no longer unbearably loud. We women are still clinging to each other in silence as the strangers, in urgent tones, say something about getting out because their god is destroying...what? Our city? Now Lot is gone again and we - as still as a triple-domed rock - are alone with the strangers. If the townsmen had been ready to tear our family to pieces, what might these aliens do to us? Stunned and bewildered by this series of shocks we wait: no-one moves. When Lot returns, subdued and wordless, Mother, Tsirah and I huddle in a corner away from all three men; the silence is absolute. No-one sleeps through all that long night. Everyone seems to be waiting for something and I have no idea what that might be. My body is no longer shaking, but a heavy dread fills me. I drift....

Suddenly men are shouting, grabbing at me, pulling me and I scream. No sound comes out of my mouth. Rousing from my half-waking nightmare, I realise that Tsirah is shaking me and whispering that I must get up. As I stagger upright my garment is clinging to my skin, clammy with sweat. Something is happening: I hear the guests speaking in low, urgent tones. They sound like they are giving Lot orders, and I feel a stab of fear. What are they saying?

My heart beating fast, I make a huge effort to make sense of their words. There is no time to lose – we must escape now! The city is to be punished! What does that mean? Lot just sits there, looking stupefied. I feel panic rising again and I want to shout at him. Then without warning, the guests spring into action. Throwing open the door, one grabs Lot and me, the other Mother and Tsirah, and we are all rushed along the city's alleyways as if a whirlwind is pursuing us. The sky is just light enough to see that the direction of our dash is towards the eastern gate. There is no time to think, but the headlong dash is almost exhilarating. When we stop, I am so occupied with catching my breath that I don't see how the men get the gate open, but here we all are - outside the wall.

As I look around the countryside is emerging from the night shadows. An unusual mist rises from the plain, and there is a soft hissing sound from somewhere out there. I feel totally bewildered and the terror of last night creeps again into my heart. Mother looks near collapse: she hasn't run for years. Still gasping she leans against me, and I lower her onto the ground. Now Lot is talking with the men. I can only hear snatches of his words, but they sound polite. Lot is good with words, although – thank the gods - last night they didn't persuade the townsmen. I feel a sudden stab of pain in my belly and I double over. Oh, I cannot think about last night! And if the city is really going to be destroyed, what will we do? Where will we go? And Mother – poor Netsiv! Her old mother and other family members are still inside the city! Who will save them? And the cousins to whom Tsirah and I are betrothed: what about them? Perhaps I should say something. But as I slowly straighten Lot, his chest still heaving in the strangely thick, warm air, turns towards us. His eyes, heavy with fatigue in a haggard face, do not see Tsirah or me. In his eyes we are nothing, a nuisance at best.

“Quickly!” Now the strangers are shouting at us to get moving again. Lot pulls Netsiv to her feet and points towards the town of Zoar, barely visible in the leaden dawn. I know what Mother is thinking: “Surely we do not have to go there! What about my mother and sisters?” I look again at Lot, and realise instantly that there is no turning back. I recall his disappearance during the night: perhaps he had been trying to persuade our relatives to escape with us, and failed. Sick at heart, I stumble down the path after him. I can barely breathe the air which is growing more hot and heavy each moment. Lot is going too fast: Mother cannot keep up, and at the same time she must be desperate to turn back.

As Lot, Tsirah and I stumble towards the gate of Zoar, I look up wearily to see a dull red sun hanging in a murky sky above the eastern ranges. Then I feel it: a shudder followed by a long, deep rumble. And suddenly above and all around the world explodes. A massive boom is followed by a roaring in my ears as I am

thrown to the ground. The sky above is burning, its heat singeing my hair and heels and burning through my robe. Somehow I find the strength to kneel, stagger and then run for my life. The air is so pungent I begin to choke and cough as I run. In the lurid red light and swirling dust I see Tsirah keeping pace with me. Ahead of us Lot, stumbling, reaches the gate and collapses to the ground just inside the wall as Tsirah and I tumble in after him.

Both where is Mother? My heart leaps in my chest and still gasping for breath, I realise that Mother hasn't arrived: she must still be out there! Jumping up and lurching towards the entrance I am knocked back by a blast of boiling, smoky, grit-filled air. Through the haze I squint back at Tsirah and Lot lying as if dead, their skin blistered, mouths open and parched, eyes closed. I crumple on top of them, and lie there for I know not how long.....

No, I do not know how long we have been in Zoar. Our mother is dead: she could not have survived that, that, whatever it was. Sodom, and everyone in the city, is gone. This must be the end of all things.

But it is not the end. Not quite. As I sit in the remains of an old building in Zoar, fragments of what has happened since we fled Sodom begin to return. The pain had been so intense that for an unknown period I dropped in and out of consciousness. One day I woke to find that we had been left in this ruin with its partially torn-away roof under which a slab of ash-laden bread lay beside a skin of water. Our blistered bodies seemed to take a long time to self-heal. Eventually I was able to venture into a street, but the few people around shunned me as if I had brought the devastation. The silence was eerie in a town of this size. Later I found a young boy who told me that houses had been ransacked and food was already scarce. People had fought over the pickings and then left. Others continued to prowl, ready to strike out to defend whatever they had found. As the days passed, Lot grew more wary, agitated and anxious to get away.

So once again we are on the move, this time under cover of darkness and towards the mountain to which, according to Lot, the messengers wanted us to escape. It was a bit of luck to find a food and wine store in a thicket a few hours north-east of Zoar as we looked to find a place to sleep during the daylight hours. Carrying the food and wine now makes climbing much slower, but at last we find a large cave with a trickling spring nearby. We all sleep on and off for what could have been days, but eventually Tsirah and I establish a kind of routine.

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Now I have physically and mentally recovered enough to think. Emotionally I am still in a mess. Day after day Tsirah and I mourn our mother. As much as we are able, we avoid Lot who has become a stranger even to himself. I loathe thinking of him as a father after what he said to the men in Sodom on that horrific night. I never want to experience that again, but the horror I felt still slithers back into my belly when it is least expected. I will never trust him again.

Despite these setbacks, through necessity Tsirah and I have become resourceful. We are learning to live in the wild, finding out what plants and insects are edible, even catching a kid and then its mother when she came searching for her baby. It is so good to drink the milk she produces. The wilderness has sustained and nurtured us in ways that Lot cannot or will not. He sits brooding in the cave and would have drunk all the wine if Tsirah hadn't found a good hiding place for it and told Lot that the goats had ripped open the skins.

Yes, there is plenty of time to think and plan as I look out over the blackened plain and then around at the mountain's rocky outcrops sheltering our hidden creatures and special plants. Lot isn't going to do anything; he's either scared - jumping at shadows - weeping or staring sightlessly. He says that he just wants to die. If we are to survive and thrive, I know it is up to me. No strange men are going to come to visit us now, and it would be terrifying if they did. The only way forward is for Tsirah and me to create our own families and begin our own

dynasties. With so many people destroyed in the cataclysm, the few surviving women must produce babies again, or the world really will end. Both Tsirah and I are well now, especially with milk and the mountain's produce to make us strong. So, at the right time of the month....

The thought is repulsive, but I am sure that if Tsirah and I can give Lot the right amount of wine on the chosen night, it might just work. There is absolutely no way I could ever talk with him about our dilemma. I refuse to trust him about anything, and since he treated us as disposable objects, I feel no compunction about treating him in a similar way. Anyway, Tsirah and I have discussed the plan thoroughly. There's a kind of scary excitement and guilty dread about it all.

Now our bodies are ready, so I will put my plan into action tonight. It will be such a relief when it is over, but I *must* survive it somehow, despite the revulsion I feel. If it works, Tsirah will implement the plan tomorrow night, although she too feels nauseated at the thought. We will first give ourselves a few good gulps of the wine to find the courage to go through with it! It is so important that we achieve our goal; Lot's god would not have sent those men to rescue us if our destiny were to die alone on a mountainside. As I remind Tsirah, there is one phrase from Lot's speech to our saviours which I overheard on that fateful morning, and it keeps repeating in my head: "And I myself shall live." Yes indeed, our family shall live and continue living into the future!

## Appendix 4

### A Semi-literal Translation of the Story of Zelophehad's Daughters in Numbers 27:1-11, Numbers 36:1-13 and Joshua 17:3-6.

#### *Numbers 27:1-11*

Then drew near (*qal* imperf. 3fs of *qrb* קרב) the daughters of Zelophehad, son of Hopher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, from the clan of Manasseh, the son of Joseph. And these were the names of his daughters: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah (vs. 1). And they stood before (*'amad* עמד) Moses and before Eleazar the priest and before the leaders and all the congregation (*'edah* עדה) (at) the door of the tent of meeting (vs. 2) saying, “Our father died in the wilderness. He was not with the congregation which congregated against the Lord in the congregation of Korah, but he died because of his own sin. He had no sons (vs. 3). Why should the name of our father be cut off (*nip'al* of *gara* גרע) from the midst of his clan, because he had no son? Give us a possession (*'achuzzah* אחוזה) among our father's brothers (vs. 4).”

So Moses brought their judgement/rule (*mishpath* מִשְׁפָּט) before YHWH (vs. 5). YHWH said to Moses (vs. 6), “Justly (*ken* כן) speak the daughters of Zelophehad. You will indeed give them a possession of the entitlement among their father's brothers. You will transfer the entitlement of their father to them (vs. 7). If a man dies with no son, you shall transfer (*hip'yil* of *'br* עבר) his entitlement to his daughter (vs. 8). If there is no daughter, you will give his entitlement to his brothers (vs. 9). If there are no brothers, you will give his entitlement to his father's brothers (vs. 10). If there are no brothers of his father, you will give his entitlement to the next one from his clan (*mishpachah* מִשְׁפָּחָה) and he will take possession (*yarash* ירש) of it. It will be a statute of judgment for the sons of Israel.” Thus YHWH commanded Moses (vs. 11).

### **Numbers 36:1-13**

Then drew near (*qal* imperf. 3mp of *qrb* קרב), the heads of the fathers/ households of the clans, the sons of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh - of the clans of the sons of Joseph - and spoke before Moses and before the heads of the fathers of the sons of Israel (vs. 1), saying, “The Lord commanded (*tswh* צוה) my lord to give the land for an allotted (*grl* גרל) entitlement to the sons of Israel. And my lord was commanded by the Lord to give the entitlement of our brother Zelophehad to his daughters (vs. 2). But if they are married to any one of the sons of the tribes (*sh<sup>e</sup>batim* שבטם) of the sons of Israel (vs. 3a). Their (3fp) entitlement will be taken away from our fathers’ entitlement, and added to the entitlement of the tribe (*matteh* מטתה) to which they belong, and (away) from our allotted entitlement (vs. 3b). When the jubilee (*yobel* יבל) of the sons of Israel takes place, their entitlement will be added onto the inheritance of the tribe (*matteh* מטתה) to which they belong, and from the entitlement of the tribe of our fathers their entitlement will be taken away” (vs. 4).

So Moses commanded the sons of Israel according to the mouth/stated decision (*peh* פה) of the Lord, saying: “Justly (*ken* כן) is the tribe of the sons of Joseph speaking (vs. 5). This is the thing (*dbq* דבק) the Lord has commanded the daughters of Zelophehad, saying, “To whomever is good in their (3mp) eyes let them be wives. Only within the clan of the tribe of their (3mp) father will they be wives (vs. 6). The entitlement of the sons of Israel will not transfer (*sbb* סבב) from tribe to tribe. For a man shall cling to (*dbq* דבק) the entitlement of his fathers’ tribe, the sons of Israel (vs. 7).

And every daughter possessing (*yrsh* ירש) an entitlement in a tribe of the sons of Israel, will become a wife to someone from a clan of her father’s tribe. This is so that [each] man of the sons of Israel possesses his fathers’ entitlement (vs. 8). So an entitlement will not be transferred from tribe to tribe. Therefore a man shall cling to his entitlement from the tribes of the sons of Israel” (vs. 9).

As the Lord commanded Moses, thus did the daughters of Zelophehad (vs. 10). Mahlah, Tirzah, Hoglah, Milcah and Noah, the daughters of Zelophehad, became wives to the sons of their father's brothers (vs. 11). They became wives in the clans of the sons of Manasseh the son of Joseph. Thus their entitlement was added to (על אל)<sup>2</sup> the tribe of their father's clan (vs. 12).

These are the commands and the statutes (*mishpatim* משפטים) which the Lord commanded via the hand of Moses to the sons of Israel in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho (vs. 13).

### ***Joshua 17:3-6***

Zelophehad, the son of Hephher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh did not have sons, but only daughters. These were the names of his daughters: Mahlah, and Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah (vs.3). They drew near (*qrb* קרב) before Eleazar the priest, before Joshua son of Nun, and before the leaders (*n<sup>e</sup>siyiyim* נשיאים), and said, "The Lord commanded Moses to give (*ntn* נתן) us an entitlement along with our brothers." So, according to the command (*peh* פה) of the Lord, he gave them (*3mp*) an entitlement, along with their (*3fp*) father's brothers (vs. 4).

Thus ten portions fell to Manasseh, besides the land of Gilead and the Bashan which is on the other side of the Jordan (vs.5). This is because the daughters of Manasseh were entitled to an entitlement along with his sons, and the land of the Gilead remained for the sons of Manasseh (vs.6).

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<sup>2</sup> Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 52, # 292.

## **Appendix 5**

### **Mahlah bat Zelophehad: A Midrash**

I am waiting with my sisters under the shade of the trees lining the wadi where its string of pools sparkle in the slanting sunlight. It is mid afternoon and, after eagerly arriving soon after dawn, we are now tired and anxious. As the day wears on all the confidence I felt earlier has evaporated like the perspiration from our garments. The Great Court of Israel's leaders - along with all men eligible to contribute to legal matters - meets rarely. It is the first time my sisters and I have left our tent during proceedings of the Great Court, so our initial view of this vast number of men congregating on the plain this morning was overwhelming. Behind the high priest and Moses is the Tent of Meeting, in a semi circle around the leaders stand the clan heads, and stretching away into the distance are all the adult men of Israel. As decisions are made, young messengers run to and fro, relaying information to the men of the various clans.

We have no representative in that mighty mass of men, for Mother birthed five daughters but no sons for our honourable and respected father Zelophehad. A year ago our parents passed down into the shadows of *Sheol*: these days barely any members of their generation remain alive. Our parents' deaths came at the time of Korah's rebellion against Moses, but Mother and Father died from a feverish sickness not - as some people have been spreading around - as punishment for insurrection. Ahian, the eldest son of Uncle Shemida and our *goel*, apparently believes the gossip about Father and has refused to speak up for our cause. Either that, or he thinks that our campaign for justice is too risky. If he had spoken up for us as the law requires, we sisters would not have embarked on this even more risky venture – namely, to petition the Great Court of Israel on our own.

Despite the heat of the day, a shiver slips along my spine. As the enormity of what we are about to do strikes me more forcefully than at any time in the last

few months, I feel dizzy and struggle to maintain my composure. I take a deep breath and decide to encourage my sisters - and myself - by recounting our recent 'journey' and how we came to reach this momentous day.

“My dear sisters, being the oldest has been a burden to me since we have been orphaned. All of you have taken comfort in believing that I am totally confident that we are doing the right thing for Father’s sake. But today my confidence is flagging, and in looking around at you all, I can see that the enormity of what we are about to do is also sapping your resolve. Your eyes are all saying to me, ‘Are we really right in questioning the Lord’s law?’

“During the census it was Milcah who pointed out that because Father died without sons, no land would be allocated in his name. In other words, the future of the Zelophehad clan is non-existent because none of us are sons. This outlook contrasts completely with that of the deceased patriarchs whose adult sons have been counted in the census. The latter are all eligible for land allocations which will memorialise their deceased fathers. After all, our fathers were young refugees from Egypt and should be remembered. So what has our father done to deserve sinking into obscurity? He fathered children for the future expansion and prosperity of the nation, but because none are male, his name will simply disappear. We could not bear the thought of that: he had been a most unusual father in that he loved us beyond measure and always spoke respectfully to us - almost as if we were his elders. In return we all loved and respected him as a great man. He was also a great story teller: he loved the history of our people and encouraged us to learn what he would have taught the sons whom the Lord withheld from him. He even taught us the laws which the Lord gave to Moses almost forty years ago in the Sinai. Now he is dead, and we miss him and Mother so much...

“The more we thought about Father’s name disappearing, the more we knew that we could not let this happen. Milcah suggested that we should ask our *goel*

Ahian what to do, but on broaching the matter with him he gave us evasive answers. Eventually when Ahian refused outright to help us, we all expressed our distress - all except Noah, who became unusually quiet and abstracted for almost a week.

“Noah is the youngest in our family and can be excitable. She also is an ideas person, and after her strangely quiet week, Noah reminded all of us that Hoglah has a phenomenal memory, and that Hoglah is the one person we know who is able to recite all God’s laws off by heart. Noah then begged Hoglah to recount the laws for the rest of us to see if another way could be found to keep Father’s name alive. When we others were weary from listening to Hoglah’s recitations, Noah looked at us with her bright eyes and said in unusually solemn tones: ‘Although we are unmarried young women, and although Miriam was punished for confronting her brother, I think that we would be successful if we approach Moses in a humble manner and ask him to favour us with his great kindness. We can point out to him that Father was a good man and not a rebel, and that he deserves to be granted land through us because our *goel* will not.’

“‘But,’ I protested, ‘Even if Moses does agree with us, there are no sons to work the land! How can it work?’ ‘*We* will work it, Mahlah!’ cried Noah. ‘We are young and strong!’ ‘Don’t be ridiculous,’ intervened practical Tirzah, ‘Father for all his treating us as sons would never have envisaged that.’

“And so the discussions and arguments continued. One day while labouring at our daily chores we decided to take the huge step of petitioning the Great Court. We talked and planned and revised the plan over and over again. Our expression of intent was relayed to Moses by our cousin Ira because he is related to Moses through his mother. Eventually we were informed that we might approach the court when it next convened, and overcoming our initial shock and excitement we began to prepare in earnest.

“We decided that because this was a legal matter it should be presented according to legal procedures. We would provide the court with a short history of our father’s life and death, and then present a well-reasoned argument that the land allocation was a once-and-for-all event which should not disenfranchise Zelophehad simply because he had daughters rather than sons. Then we planned to ask Moses politely to give us our father’s rightful possession, just as his brothers’ children are to be given their fathers’ possessions. I would begin the speech, and each of my sisters would add to it – all except Milcah, who was too terrified to speak to such a vast assembly of men. ‘But I will come with you!’ she added, tears in her eyes. We hugged each other, and then four of us - with Milcah as prompter - practised and practised our words until we knew them perfectly.”

From the corner of my eye I see a flash of white and I turn to watch a man coming this way. He gesticulates, indicating that we are to move forward. The court is ready to hear our case. Having just finished telling the history of our planned endeavour to my dear sisters as they sit around me, I realise that the recitation has made my fear disappear completely! I know we have prepared well, and I trust that the Lord will guide Moses and Eleazar as they make a judgement. We all rise, straighten our scarves and brush the dust from our skirts. As my sisters turn to me as eldest to make the first move, I suddenly give them a huge smile! They all smile back, and together we move out from under the trees to walk calmly, our heads held high, towards the assembly. If only Father could see his five daughters at this moment: how proud he would be!

.....

That scene took place five years ago, but it remains vivid in my memory as the most momentous event of my life. I know my sisters would say the same thing. Not only did the Lord vindicate us to Moses, declaring that we were right to challenge Israel’s land entitlement law, but the Almighty granted - not only us, but all brotherless women now and into the future - the right to inherit land. It was and is truly amazing: unbelievable!

On that unforgettable day when we presented our petition, we did not fully realise into what danger we had placed ourselves until, with a stab of terror in my heart, I heard Noah forget her prepared polite request to Moses and Eleazar and unexpectedly burst forth with, “Give us a possession among our father’s brothers!” Moses, our great leader, had looked shocked and uncertain. As soon as our presentation was over, my legs began to shake and I wondered what had possessed us to go through with this. How could we have imagined that it could be successful? Will the ground open and swallow us as it did Korah and his followers? Will we be struck with leprosy or bitten by snakes? As Moses moved to the tent of meeting, I looked sideways at my sisters who looked as pale and shaken as I felt. Only Noah seemed elated by her daring and dangerous words: her eyes were brighter than ever and there were two patches of pink on her cheeks.

The rest, as they say, is history. Of course there were problems afterwards, because Ahian and the men of our clan were convinced that they would be disadvantaged by this new law which the Lord ordained because of our petition. Eventually they found an argument to counter the new law, so a month or two before we moved into Canaan, Ahian and the other Gileadite leaders presented the Court of Disputes with their challenge to “our” law. It was not a full assembly of the whole congregation, but it was an auspicious enough occasion. The upshot of their protest was Moses’ announcement that the Lord had agreed that marriages of women with land entitlements to men from other tribes was a problem if the land then became part of those tribes. So it was no surprise when we were told that we could only marry Gileadite men. What did amaze us, however, was that the Lord said *we* could choose whom to marry within the new restriction. We were so taken aback that we made no protest, and after much deliberation among ourselves, we decided to marry our cousins, and we chose five fine men whose fathers were brothers to our father. Thankfully Ahian was already married, so none of us felt obliged to consider him.

Little did we realise that further terrible times were ahead of us. The wilderness had presented so many frightening challenges that the dangers involved in attacking Canaanite strongholds seemed minimal because of Joshua's confidence that the Lord would simply give the enemy into our hands. However, from the time of the invasion of Canaan until now, the horror and misery of the bloodshed has been unspeakable. Suffice to say that - using all our ingenuity - we all managed to survive. We sisters were thankful that we could help each other during the months of wretchedness which dragged into years of misery. Milcah's husband was killed, and she and her son Zelly now live with me and my husband. And Tirzah spends her days caring for her now-crippled husband while we sisters and our families all help to work their fields.

Yes, we all have fields: we did indeed receive our inheritance and what an occasion it was! With our husbands' blessings, we sisters approached the land court to place our claim. We laughed about it becoming common practice for the daughters of Zelophehad to be fronting up to courts of justice. But we didn't laugh when lo and behold, Joshua told us that we were each to receive the blessing of a firstborn male (Father was the firstborn of his father Hephher). That is, each one of us was eligible for a double portion of land just east of the River Jordan! We did not laugh because we were totally stunned with the news! No one explained why we were allocated the firstborn portions, but we cannot help feeling that the Lord has an especially soft spot for us. Or perhaps Joshua and Eleazar are the soft-spotted ones!

With the extra land we hope one day to employ reliable men and women who otherwise would have had no work. Just as we planned that original speech so carefully, so have we and our families worked long hours together to prepare "Zelophehad Acres" for farming. It's backbreaking work and progress has been painfully slow, but we praise our Lord for his gracious kindness.

## Appendix 6

### A Semi-literal Translation of the Story of Jephthah's Daughter in Judges

#### 11:29-40

Then came upon (*hayah* 'al עליה) Jephthah the Spirit of YHWH. And he passed through Gilead and Manasseh, and he passed through Mizpah of Gilead. And from Mizpah of Gilead he passed through to the Sons of Ammon (vs. 29).

And Jephthah vowed a vow (*nadar neder* נדר נדר) to YHWH and saying, 'If you will surely give the Sons of Ammon into my hand (vs. 30), then the one coming out who comes out from the doors of my house to greet me when I return in peace (*b<sup>e</sup>shalom* בשלום) from the Sons of Ammon will be YHWH's, and I will offer up (*hip* 'iyל perfect of 'alah עליה) him/her/it<sup>3</sup> as a burnt offering (*'olah* עולה) (vs. 31).

So Jephthah passed through to the Sons of Ammon to fight against them. And YHWH gave them into his hand (vs. 32). And he struck them from Aroer to as far as (until you come to) Minnith, twenty cities, and as far as Abel-Karamin with a very great slaughter. Thus the Sons of Ammon were subdued before the face of the sons of Israel (vs. 33).

Then Jephthah came to (*bo* ' בו) Mizpah to his house. And look! His daughter was coming out to greet him with timbrels and with dances. And only she, she alone; he had no other son or daughter (vs. 34). And so it was when he saw her, he tore his clothes and said, "Aaah! My daughter, you have truly brought me very low. You yourself have become a calamity to me. For I have opened my mouth to YHWH, so I am not able to go back (repent) (*shub* שוב)" (vs. 35). Then she said to him, "My father, you have opened your mouth (*ptsh* פצה, *piy* פי) to YHWH. Do to me according to what has gone out from your mouth now that YHWH has

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<sup>3</sup> The pronoun is masculine, but in Hebrew, like English, the masculine is often used as a generic term.

wrought (*qal* perf. of *‘asah* עָשָׂה) vengeance for you on your enemies, on the Sons of Ammon” (vs. 36).

Then she said to her father, “Let this thing be done for me. Leave me alone two months, and I shall go and descend to the mountains and weep over my young-womanhood/ nubility, I and my friends (*re ‘yoth* רַעִיּוֹת)” (vs. 37). And he said, “Go”, and he sent her two months. And she went, she and her friends. And she wept (*bakah* בָּכָה) over her young-womanhood on the mountains (vs. 38).

And so it was that at the end of two months she returned to her father, and he did to her his vow which he had vowed. And she had not known a man. So she became a statute/custom (*choq* חֹק) in Israel (vs. 39). Year by year/from days to days go the daughters of Israel to recount/celebrate (*tanah* תָּנָה) the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite, four days in the year (vs. 40).

## **Appendix 7**

### **Seila bat Jephthah: A Midrash**

I am Seila and I live in Mizpah with my father Jephthah and our two servants, Beriah and Adah. Mother died five years ago. So much has changed since we came to live in Mizpah last year, but at least Adah and Beriah have not changed. Because of their father's debts they became our slaves a few years before I was born, and they care for me as if they were my older brother and sister. Until a year ago we lived in Tob which is northeast of Gilead and my birthplace. It was never an easy life in Tob because my father lived there as a fighter who had no allegiance to any man. His only allegiance was to the Lord God of Israel. Just before she died, Mother - whose name was Liah - told me Father's story.

Jephthah's mother had disgraced her family by running away from the man to whom she was betrothed in order to be with Gilead, my grandfather. So when her illegitimate son Jephthah was born, he and his mother were shunned by every relative. After old Gilead died, Jephthah was disinherited and ostracised by his half-brothers. He travelled to Tob and became the leader of a rag-tag band of fighters. Once they saved the life and property of a man called Ziba. As a reward, Ziba gave Liah - my beautiful mother - to Jephthah as his bride. Apparently Liah lost babies before and after I was born; then five years ago she died giving birth to yet another stillborn boy. Afterwards I thought my father would die too, so heartbroken was he. I was heartbroken also, but in his sorrow Father did not notice me.

Soon after that, Jephthah changed. He was away from home much more, always travelling with his men, fighting and looting. When he was home I found it difficult to talk to him, perhaps because we both missed Mother so much. But he would still get into intense debates about religion and politics with his fellow raiders. Although Father has many abilities - including skill in making speeches - he doesn't make friends easily. He is wary and does not trust anyone, not even

me: I'm only a girl after all. Jephthah puts what little trust he does have in the Lord God of Israel.

About a year ago Father was called by the elders of Gilead to lead their army against the forces of Ammon. This was an incredible turnaround by the men of Gilead, and Father could barely contain his amazement and excitement. I think he was also scared about being offered such an important and dangerous job, but he acted tough and got the appointment on his terms. That is, he made sure the agreement was ratified before the Lord. So we moved here to Mizpah – an endangered town in Gilead near the border with Ammon.

Now that Jephthah has been made commander of the Gileadite army he proclaims that the Lord is on his side in this conflict. I am not sure he really believes it: Jephthah will always be a wary man. Meanwhile I try to put my trust in the Lord God of Israel, for my God is my father's God.

Unlike Father I make friends easily. Although I knew no-one in Mizpah when we arrived Adah, who is a thoughtful woman despite her lowly status, made sure that I met the local girls and their mothers. And although I am still an outsider in their midst, I have received some acceptance - probably because they all hope desperately that Jephthah can successfully free Gilead from the Ammonite raids which have so terrified everyone for years on end. Many, many people have lost their homes, been tortured or captured or killed... Jephthah simply *must* win this war. If Gilead is defeated, then Mizpah will be among the first towns to be destroyed, and we girls all know what that would mean for us.

Father has been gathering troops for the last two months, and I haven't seen him in all that time. When he left I could tell he was so focussed on his battle strategies and so tense about it all that he hardly said goodbye. I worry so much about him because he is full of hidden fears. So much depends on this venture, and I know he is not certain about the Lord's plans. Having lived away from

Israel for so long, he neglected worship rituals and God's laws. I believe that the Lord's Spirit is with him because Jephthah has been able to inspire the troops, something no-one else has achieved for many years. But perhaps God may be capricious and punish him for past sins. The problem is that father - ever wary and lacking in self-confidence - has received no word of affirmation from the Lord.

Today I heard something which confirms my worst fears for my father. The word has spread that Jephthah has made a powerful vow to the Lord, a vow so dangerous that surely the Lord must respond to it. People have repeated the exact words of Jephthah's vow so often now, that I know them by heart. "If you (the God of Israel) will surely give the Sons of Ammon into my hand, then the one coming out who comes out from the doors of my house to greet me when I return in peace from the Sons of Ammon will be the Lord's, and I will offer up the one as a burnt offering."

These words have turned my whole world has turned upside down and I am terrified. I know my father: he is desperate to find a way to ensure victory and this, the most precarious of vows, will surely achieve its aim. I know he believes that the risk must be great for the vow to be meaningful. I cannot make a goat or sheep come out of our house because that would be such an inadequate return for a great victory wrought by the Holy One. Besides, he said "the one coming out...to *greet* me." The truth is simple and terrible. He means a human being! Perhaps he hopes for Adah to greet him, as she is a slave. But if she is sacrificed her brother will want to avenge her, slave or no. Besides, I love her for caring for me when Mother died. I cannot allow her to die.

I am so distressed, and I have no-one in whom I can confide. I do not know the women of Mizpah well enough, and I cannot talk to Adah about it because when the war is won - and it will be won because the vow is so powerful - Adah will feel obliged to be the person who greets Jephthah. No, I must be the one to go out to Father. I must die, because as a virgin I fulfil all the requirements for an

honourable sacrifice. To sacrifice a firstborn son would certainly be more powerful, but my father has no son.

I know that my death as an *'olah* will be terrible for Father, but whatever happens in the future it will ensure God's continuing support for him and for Israel. If the vow is fulfilled in a less than honourable way, he will be cursed. But if he fulfils it, father will be certain to gain the power and status he needs as leader and judge not only of Gilead but of all Israel. Perhaps he will become one of Israel's greatest leaders! Never again would he have to endure the shame of being an outcast. He would be remembered forever for what he achieved. Jephthah will win this war against Ammon with the mighty God of Israel fighting for him, and I will help to seal Father's honourable place in Israel.

But for all my determination, I cannot help but weep. My weeping is for myself, and all that I am losing. I have so looked forward to taking part in the sacred ritual of menarche in which girls of the district take part when they reach marriageable age. The ritual lasts for two months after the harvest. The girls retreat to the mountains with old Zilpah, the wise woman of Gilead who teaches them what they must know as brides and guides them through the rituals of womanhood. I am just beginning to learn a little about it now that I and four other girls of Mizpah have begun to prepare for the retreat under Zilpah's guidance. Oh, I can't bear to think about all that I am losing! My head aches from sobbing; my heart aches unbearably.

I am now drying my tears as I make a resolution. I know that I must die, but I know that I must also attend the sacred ritual. After all, to be offered up as an *'olah* means I will become a bride of the Lord. How magnificent! How utterly terrifying! But this makes it more important than ever that I am with the women at the end of my life. I want to take part in the rituals that both mourn and celebrate the end of girlhood and the beginning of adult life as a bride and wife. And as an outsider I need and long for the support and care of these women. I love Adah, but

it is not enough. I miss Mother so desperately. Mother! Why are you not here when I need you now more than ever before!

And so I plan for Father's victorious return. I will find out the exact day that Jephthah plans to arrive in Mizpah, and I will ensure that both Beriah and Adah are at Helek the slaughter man's place to assist him the preparation of sheep for the victory feast. I will be demanding and capricious as I find excuses to prevent them from going earlier. I plan to send them off in a rush when I see dust clouds rising in the distance. Adah will instruct me not to move from the house, and I will pretend to promise obedience.

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Today is the Day of Sacrifice. The altar is prepared, and I am ready to die. It is just over two months since that terrible day on which I saw Father riding his mule into the village towards our house. My mouth dry and my heart thumping, I picked up my tambourine and danced out of the house to greet him. I wanted to sing, but the sounds would not come out. I thought I was prepared for his reaction, but I wasn't. The look of shocked horror on his face was the worst thing I have ever experienced in my life. It was then that I nearly fainted. I remember thinking: "What had I done?! I must have been mad to plan this!" But when I heard Jephthah tearing his clothes and screaming out his accusations against me the tears simply gushed from my eyes, splashing into the dust at my feet. I wished that he would strike me down then and there. How could he blame me when I did all this for him alone? It was a ghastly nightmare. The deed was done, the dye cast, and to run away then would only spell disaster and shame. The thought of the shame jolted me back to my resolve: our family must never be shamed again. I felt my heart hardening, and in that moment I began to feel like an adult. I looked up at father who seemed like a distraught child, and immediately I knew what I had to say, and what I had to do.

So my words came out: plain and brutal. I reminded Jephthah that he had initiated this by making the vow to the Lord; that he had to do the deed with me as the

*'olah* because the Lord had done His part by ensuring victory. I experienced no feelings at that moment. It seemed as though I was separated from the scene, looking at myself saying the words which spelt my death. I saw Seila - so small and isolated, so totally alone. Jephthah said nothing, nothing at all. He who always had so much to say to others was now absolutely silent.

I closed my eyes. When I opened them again, I was no longer at a distance: I was in the scene and facing my father. What I saw was an old man staring with dead, unseeing eyes. I couldn't bear it: I almost broke down again. But I wouldn't let myself, caught as I was between love and anger, fear and compassion. "I am strong, tough," I said to myself over and over. "I will not allow myself collapse at his feet and beg for mercy." So I took some deep breaths and with a surprisingly strong voice I told Jephthah to let me have two months' reprieve to attend the women's rite-of-passage retreat in the mountains. I knew he would not deny that to me, and I was right. It was the best time to ask him, while he was still in shock and unable to think. "Go." It was his last word to me.

I went to the mountains with the four other girls and Zilpah. It was the best thing I could ever have done for myself. It was the saddest of times, and the most wonderful of times. I learned much and I was nurtured and loved. I cried my heart out for all I was leaving behind, for never lying with a man, for the babies I would never hold in my arms as they suckled. As two moons grew and shrank I also cried for the precious women who surrounded me and helped me through that time. I even cried for my father.

Now I am lifted onto the pyre. I keep my eyes closed, shutting out the sky, the hills, the faces of the onlookers, my father. As if from a great distance I can hear Adah's sobs and the chants of the women; they calm me. My eyes open. The moment Jephthah raises his knife the knowledge comes to me. I know that I am not going to God – at least not to God alone.

Today I go to my mother, wherever she is.

## Appendix 8

### A Semi-literal Translation of the Story of David's Daughter Tamar in 2

#### Samuel 13:1-22

And so it was afterwards that Absalom had a beautiful sister, and her name was Tamar. And Amnon son of David loved (*'ahab* בהא) her (vs. 1). Amnon was tormented (*tzrr* ררצ) into making himself ill (*hitpa'el* התפעל of *chalah* הלה) because of Tamar his sister, for she was nubile/of marriageable age (*b'tulah* הלוּתב). It was too difficult, in the eyes of Amnon, to do anything to her (vs. 2).

Amnon had a friend, and his name was Jonadab son of Shimeah, brother of David. Jonadab was a very wise (*chakam* מכח) man (vs. 3). He said to him, “Why are you so haggard (*kakah* הככ), son of the king, morning after morning? Will you not tell me?” And Amnon said to him, “Tamar, the sister of Absalom my brother, I continue to love” (vs. 4).

Then Jonadab said to him, “Lie down on your bed and make yourself ill (*hitpa'el* of *chalah* הלה). When your father comes to see you, say to him, “Please let Tamar my sister come to me, so she can ritually prepare (*hip'iy* imperfect of *brh* הרב) me bread. Let her perform (*'sh* השע) the healing ritual (*habbiryah* הירבה) in my sight so that I may watch (see) and eat from her hand” (vs. 5).

So Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill. And when the king came to see him, Amnon said to the king, “I beg you, let Tamar my sister come and prepare heart loaves (*piel* of *lbb* בבל) in my sight, two heart-loaves (*lebibot* בבלתו), so that I may break-fast (*brh* הרב) from her hand” (vs. 6). So David sent home for Tamar saying, “Please go to the house of Amnon your brother and perform (*'sh* השע) the healing ritual for him” (vs. 7).

Tamar went to the house of Amnon her brother, and he was lying down. She took the dough, kneaded it, prepared *it* in his sight, and baked the heart-loaves (vs. 8). She took the jug (*masreth* תרשמ)<sup>4</sup> and poured in front of him (before his face), but he refused to eat (piel of *m'n* ונאמ). And Amnon said, “Send out everyone from beside me (from my presence)”, and everyone went out from his presence (vs. 9). Then Amnon said to Tamar, “Bring the ritual food (*habbiryah* הירבה) into the inner room so that I may eat from your hand.” And Tamar took the heart loaves which she had made, and brought *them* to Amnon her brother, into the inner room (*hacheder* ההדר) (vs. 10).

But when she brought *them* to him to eat, he took hold of (*chazaq* קזה) her and said to her, “Come! Lie with me (*shikbiy 'immiy* עמי יבכש), my sister” (vs. 11). She said to him, “No, my brother, do not force (violate) (piel of *'nh* הניע) me, for such a thing is not done in Israel. Do not commit (do) (*'asah* עשה) this sacrilegious folly (*n<sup>e</sup>balah* הלבנ) (vs. 12). And I, where could I take my shame (disgrace) (*cherppah* חרפה)? And you, you would be as one of the sacrilegious fools (*n<sup>e</sup>balim* בילבנ) in Israel. So now, I beg you, speak to the king, for he will not keep me from (deny me to) you” (vs. 13).

But he would not (*lo' 'abah* אל הבא) listen to her voice. He overpowered her (*vayyechezaq mimmennah* ויזקז הנמנ), so he forced (piel of *'anah* הניע) her down and laid her (*vayyish<sup>e</sup>kkab 'otah* התא בכשיו) (vs. 14). Then Amnon hated her with at very great hatred (*sin'ah g<sup>e</sup>dolah m'oth* הלידג האנשדאמ), so that the hatred *with* which he hated her was greater than the love *with* which he had loved her. Amnon said to her, “Get up! Go!” (vs. 15) But she said to him, “No! For this evil (*ra'ah* הער) in sending me away (piel infinitive construct of *shalach* שלח) is

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<sup>4</sup> *Masreth* is an harpaxlegomenon, and because the word follows the baking of loaves it has usually been translated as the ‘pan’ from which Tamar pours (*ytsq*). However, the word for jug (*m<sup>e</sup>surah*) is very similar, so *masreth* may well mean a jug for pouring liquid rather than a pan for pouring cakes. Bledstein, 1992, 19.

greater than the other which you did to me,” But he would not listen to her (vs. 16).

Then he called his young man who served him, and he said, “Put (send) outside, I beg you, this from my presence (from me), and bolt the door after her” (vs. 17). She wore (on her was) a special garment (*k<sup>e</sup>tonet passim* תַּנְתַּךְ בְּסָפִי), for thus were clothed the daughters of the king, the ones ready for marriage (*b<sup>e</sup>tuloth* תַּבּוּלוֹת), in robes (*m<sup>e</sup>‘ilyiyim* מֵיִלְיִים). His servant (the one serving him) put her outside and bolted the door after her (vs. 18). Tamar took ashes to her head, and she tore the special garment which she wore. And she put her hand on her head and walked, crying out as she went (vs. 19).

Absalom, her brother, said to her, “Has Aminon (אִינֹן), your brother, been with you? Now my sister, be silent. He is your brother. Do not set your heart on this deed (do not take this thing to heart).” So Tamar lived desolately (active participle of *shamem* שָׁמֵם) in the house of Absalom her brother (vs. 20).

King David heard all these things, and burned greatly with anger (vs. 21). Absalom did not speak with Amnon, neither good nor bad, for he hated Amnon because of the deed that he had raped (piel of ‘*anah* אָנַח) his sister Tamar (vs. 22).

## Appendix 9

### Tamar bat David: A Midrash<sup>5</sup>

*Tamar, I remember*

*the animal howl of your voice,  
your violated body in a torn gown  
outside your brother's bolted door, your forehead  
smeared with ash.*

*You wandered*

*Bleeding through Jerusalem,*

*blamed for the lust of Amnon, your brother,  
prince of rapists and first-born, unpunished son of your father:*

*David, a king's king*

*Let me stop for a supper of falafel, fried like the last meal you cooked,  
and gather the strength to keep looking for you,  
and pray that I'll find you  
somewhere in Jerusalem*

*tomorrow, Tamar.*

Rachel M. Strubas<sup>6</sup>

I, Princess Tamar of Israel, am delighted with my interesting and privileged life. I am now a *b<sup>e</sup>tulah*, which means that I will soon be married to an important person in Israel, or a prince, or even a king of a neighbouring nation. It is all very exciting, but it is not the only significant thing in my life for I have also begun the long process of learning the rites and rituals of the religion of my mother's people. My grandfather is Talmai, the king of Geshur, and I have been initiated into the secrets of the '*Anath* cult of which Queen Maacah, my mother, is a high-priestess.<sup>7</sup> Over the past two years I have learned some of the healing

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<sup>5</sup> In this reconstruction I have given Tamar the role of a ritual healer who is treating Amnon for impotence. The reasons for this supposition are supplied in Chapter 5, "Retrieval," 431-43.

<sup>6</sup> From the poem by Rachel M. Strubas, "Tomorrow, Tamar (After II Samuel 13:1-22)," *Theology Today* 61 (2004): 224-25.

<sup>7</sup> As the deity worshipped by Tamar, I have chosen '*Anath/Ashtarath/Astarte* (a Canaanite goddess of fertility associated with Eshmun the god of healing) who is condemned by Samuel (2

rituals associated with *'Anath*. The most important ceremonies of these are the ones which require the celebrant to be a virgin. Now I have been deemed skilled enough to work as a healer among people in the palace precinct of my father King David.

Today, however, my heart is thudding painfully as I carefully prepare the ingredients for *habbiryah*. This particular *habbiryah* is a meal for the restoration of potency which the king has commanded that I perform for the crown prince Amnon. I know the exacting procedure by heart, but this is the first time I have been called to enact it. Yet to perform it for Amnon of all people! I am shocked by this, because it means that Amnon is impotent. Only a *b<sup>e</sup>tulah* can perform this ritual, and because the sufferer is a prince it falls to me alone. Despite my anxiety about enacting the ritual, I cannot refuse because the king's word is law. Silently my maids gather the necessary ingredients and equipment ready to take them to Amnon's house. Carefully they dress me in my ceremonial robe. We are ready.

There is much to remember about what is required of me in *habbiryah*, so as my maids and I move silently through the palace corridors and out into the lengthening shadows of the courtyard leading to Amnon's house, I rehearse the words and procedure in my mind. My work as a healer now dominates all my thoughts and actions. Gradually the unease dissipates, my breathing slows and the evening air cools my face. Now, as I enter Amnon's house, I feel the power of *'Anath* filling me with strength and peace. Her power assures me that, given time, my brother's potency will be restored.

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Sam. 7:3) and YHWH (1 Kings 11:33), and worshipped by Solomon (1 Kings 11:5). *'Anath* is the version which appears in the Ras Shamra Texts. John Gray, "Ashtoreth" in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville, Tn: Abingdon Press, 1962), 1: 255-56; Susan Ackerman, "'And the Women Knead Dough': The Worship of the Queen of Heaven in Sixth-Century Judah," in *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel*, edited by Peggy Day (Minneapolis, Mn.: Fortress Press, 1989), 110-13.

Another deity which Tamar may have worshipped is Asherah, a famous Semitic mother goddess and "protector of all living things." Sandra Scham, "the Lost Goddess of Israel," in *Abstracts*, vol. 58, no. 2 [online] (March/April 2005); available: <http://www.archaeology.org/0503/abstracts/israel.html> , 29 May 2008.

At first all is well, and the ceremony proceeds smoothly. It is only the first part of the potency ritual which is conducted in stages over a number of days. My maids sit with me near a small oven and at a little distance from Amnon as he lies on his luxurious bed surrounded by his favoured servants. He appears morose, his eyes dully watching me through half-closed lids. I concentrate on the first part of the ritual in which I chant an incantation while preparing the heart-loaves. Soon they are in the oven, and as I pour a libation I continue to recite the words of power and my brother continues to watch. But when it is time for him to eat the first of the baked loaves he halts the procedure as he sends all the servants from the room. Although this is a legitimate command - the ceremony has more power when the healer continues the ritual in secrecy - he should have checked with me first.

Amnon then tells me to come close to him so that I might put a piece of the bread into his mouth. A shiver of apprehension passes over me. While this repositioning is also part of the ritual, it is usually the celebrant, not the recipient, who decides the moves of the ritual. But Amnon is the crown prince after all, and used to taking the lead. Despite his knowledge that impotency requires a virgin to conduct the ceremony, it is difficult for him to accept that a woman controls every aspect of the rite. So I gather the loaves and step into his alcove.

As I kneel beside Amnon I know that my next act is to place the bread on his tongue, but I sense that something is wrong and I hesitate. Without warning, like the dart of a snake, his hand grasps my wrist in an iron grip and I hear the words of seduction hissed into my ear, “*bo ’iy, shikbiy ’immiy ’achotiy.*” Shocked, my heart jumps. Nausea fills my belly. This man is not impotent! I should not be here, I have been tricked! The proceedings have been nothing but a charade, and now I am trapped. I see the bread dropping in slow motion from my numb fingers, and visualise a future in which my life is in free fall to oblivion. No! *Anath* cannot let it happen! I am her faithful servant; I have never

broken her commands or failed to fulfil my obligations to her. She will not let me be destroyed by this man's lust. Oh *'Anath!* Tell me what I must do!

I take a deep breath as I gather my thoughts. The prince has the greater physical strength; that much is clear from the pain I feel in my arm. If I shout for help no one but his servants and my maids will hear me, and the latter could not possibly rescue me anyway. My skills in reasoning are my only recourse. I have always been able to spar verbally with the women of the court, so this is what I must do with this man. Can I think clearly enough? I tell myself to calm down; I take another deep breath. I have no time to plan a strategy, but I can appeal to his moral sense. My words tumble out in the stress of the moment, but I tell him in no uncertain terms that I will not lie with him and that he is not to force himself on me. My thoughts fly to the horrendous stories told by my stepmothers about the way that women were abused in the chaotic days before we had a king, and I am filled with sick dread. In a flash I comprehend the full impact of what taking part in illicit sex would mean. My heart hammering, my breath coming in ragged gasps, the words burst out, "No you cannot violate me! This just does not happen in the Israel of today!" I hear my voice rising as I plead for our reputations, reminding my brother of the shame that would ruin my life and his, for he would be reviled as one of Israel's degenerate fools. Surely, I thought, these drastic words must bring him to his senses. He is, after all, the heir apparent to the throne of Israel. He has too much to lose.

My mouth is dry as I look to my brother for a response and I feel my skin prickling. Now I am truly terrified, for all I see are his black, staring eyes: eyes so fierce he must be possessed. He cannot hear the words coming from my mouth. Think, Tamar, think! And the answer comes. If he is unable to control himself, the only recourse is to take me as a wife. With a surge of hope, I see that this is a genuine way out of the situation. The king is so indulgent with his sons that he will agree to the proposal, and a royal marriage will save us from

scandal. After all his past exploits with women, David would be a hypocrite to refuse his son's request.

But as soon as the words have been said, I know that my last hope is gone. Without warning the brute wrenches me onto the bed. As I struggle to free myself he roughly pulls me under him. I cannot move; terror surges into my throat and I choke. Sharp pains stab through me as he imprisons my shoulders and bruises my breast. The agony of the attack overwhelms all my senses and I plummet into an abyss of torment. I cannot breathe, I cannot think, and the pain is so intense....and then all is black.

As I regain consciousness I fleetingly see his eyes again, eyes that are now glowing with loathing and disgust. He shoves me sideways onto the floor. I roll away, shivering and crying, flesh aching and burning, sticky dampness between my legs. My *'Anath!* My *'Anath!* Why have you forsaken me?

Then in the depths of my torment I hear my attacker's voice, harsh and low, barking at me to get up and get out as if I were the lowliest of slaves: "*Qumi.... Levy!*" Those two words, the first he has uttered since his proposition, shoot through me like arrows. I thought the worst was over, but this is far worse! If he discards me like a filthy dog, my life will not be worth living. A rape victim is forever polluted, her hopes for marriage and children destroyed. I have exposed his weakness and stupidity, and he cannot cope with that. But however much he hates the sight of me, he must not send me away! It will be the end of everything! I am desperate: I must say something, but what? What can I say to shock him into realising what danger we both face?

Galvanised, I stand up, grasping my robe tightly. Something runs damply down my legs but I take no heed. I'm no longer shaking, the pain is gone: I'm fired up about what he is about to do. Gasping out my refusal to go, I name his order to leave as an evil worse than the actual rape. I am unable to stop the accusation

because if he dismisses me before we can find a way out of this nightmare, it will be impossible to salvage the situation. Surely he will come to his senses now that his lust is sated? He must! Silently I pray: '*Anath*, at least help me now; make him understand!

But now dread clutches my heart as this so-called 'brother' shouts for his most devoted servant. Almost immediately the servant is in the room: I'm sure he has been nearby, listening to my ordeal. My knees begin to shake again, and I sink down. In the polite tones one uses towards an equal (deliberately, I believe, to show his contempt for me), the master instructs the servant to remove 'this' - I am now just a thing - and bolt the door behind me. As the servant pulls me to my feet, in my benumbed state I watch a tiny bloodstain growing into a red finger near the hem of my beautiful ceremonial robe. The servant pushes me towards the doorway and I stumble through.

The door thuds shut behind me and as I crumple to the pathway the searing pain returns. Aching all over, I moan and rock forwards and backwards, my eyes closed. When I open them again I stare glazedly at the heavy embroidery of my robe as it spreads out over the flat stones. Gradually my thoughts return, and with a lurch of my heart I realise that I will never wear this garment again for it is the *k<sup>e</sup>tonet passim*, the sacred robe signifying the honour of a royal virgin and cultic celebrant, a status that has been torn from me forever. Fleetinglly I picture my ancestor Jacob as he stares at Joseph's bloodied *k<sup>e</sup>tonet passim*. It too symbolised the destruction of a young person's life by older brothers.

What can I do? It is all too late...or is it? I must get help: the servants already know what has happened to me, but I refuse to be thought of as a whore. I have been violated...can something - anything - be done? Joseph was resurrected from the dead: might I also?

Now shivering and sick with nausea, I raise myself to my feet before stumbling over to a kitchen slave who is silently passing along the wall with a basket of ashes she has cleared from one of the palace ovens. I am struck by the thought that from this day I have more in common with her than ever I will have with my old self of this morning. Stretching out a shaking arm I grasp a handful of the ash, soft and warm, and place it on my head. With my other hand I grasp the neckline of my robe, and with the ferocity I lacked just a short time ago, I rip it downwards.

How long ago was it? An eternity seems to have passed since my life of purpose and promise ended. My feet drag me along the path, and as I slowly progress I hear the sound of wailing, the thin high notes piercing the evening stillness. In those notes I can hear snatches of a lament, a lament which goes on and on.... Slowly, as the evening light fades, I realise that it is my own voice that I hear, my own howl of wretchedness. My own howling for help.

Absalom's voice is in my ears. Is he asking me something? Yes, and I hear his name Amnon. Does Absalom know what has happened? My wailing goes on, and all I can manage to do is hang on to his cloak, but it seems that he does know. I am distraught with misery and fear, but suddenly there is also a knot of anger deep inside of me. Absalom has always been my protector, but not today. Why did *'Anath* not send him earlier to burst into Amnon's chamber and save me? There is no answer to this, but I do hear Absalom's voice commanding me to silence. He is telling me that I must be quiet about this because Amnon is my brother. What does he mean? Is Absalom not going to help me? Can nothing at all be done? Obediently I attempt to stifle my cries, hoping for a word of hope from him. No word comes.

Slowly I calm down, but now I feel the shame. It burns white hot in my belly and needles my skin. I feel ashamed that I was not able to dissuade Amnon; that I didn't escape. Why didn't I suspect him earlier? Why didn't I run when I

began to feel uneasy in that room? Is there something else I could have done to stop him? And what does Absalom mean when he says that I am not to take this to heart? Does this mean that I am to forget what Amnon did to me and that he is to be protected? Is it really all too late to salvage something of my life? There is so much I simply cannot understand. Oh that I were dead!

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It is now many weeks later and winter is here. My world has changed utterly. The remainder of my life will be spent hidden away in Absalom's house. I will never go out on festive occasions, never marry, and never be a mother. I, who once looked forward to becoming the wife of a nobleman or even queen of another kingdom, am a dead woman walking. Dead to my family, my people, my gods. I am no longer one of 'Anath's cultic healers. As one polluted forever, I cannot serve her. She failed me, once her most ardent devotee. Strangely, I care nothing for any of that now. I live in a dark fog which swallows up all emotion. I am already in Sheol, the land of shadows. Desolation.

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I have lived with desolation for so long I have no way of marking the years. I have grown old and dry, but today I see a glimmer of...something. Twelve years ago one of Absalom's wives gave birth to a beautiful daughter. She was named Tamar, fruit of the palm. Now that she is a *b<sup>e</sup>tulah* I will tell her my story, and she will tell it to others. Not to arouse pity, but so that our name, at least, will live. Our name, Tamar, will bear fruit and perhaps, just perhaps, bring forth hope. If that hope grows in me, eventually I might be able to believe that 'Anath has not abandoned me after all.