

NARRATIVE STRUCTURE IN II KINGS 5

by



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ABSTRACT

The thesis is primarily a consideration of the narrative contained in II Kings 5. The problem which the thesis addresses is the understanding and interpretation of that narrative in light of a theory of literary analysis. What was desired was an analysis of the internal structure of the narrative and a means for relating that structure to the meaning of the narrative.

The first chapter presents the major concepts of Tzvetan Todorov's theory of literary structure and provides some background to his method of analysis. Here we show that there are some basic structures in the description of narrative and that these can be found in any piece of narrative. There is also a sample application of Todorov's method to the narrative of Genesis 22.

The second chapter presents a translation of II Kings 5 with notes on the text. Here we present the translation which forms the basis of the analysis in the third chapter.

The third chapter represents the body of the thesis, encompassing the actual analysis of II Kings 5. The analysis reveals that there are reciprocal structures of affliction/cure and submission/insubordination which provide the basis for the presentation of the character of the prophet Elisha. We conclude that the issue of leprosy and its cure serves only to focus the reader's attention upon the figure of Elisha, who forms the centre of the narrative and about which the narrative speaks.

The thesis argues that the application of literary methods to the biblical text can prove useful in understanding the meaning of the Bible.

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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND AND METHOD OF ANALYSIS

The following paper attempts to incorporate the work of a prominent literary critic and analyst, Tzvetan Todorov,¹ in a systematic analysis of a particular biblical narrative. The method attempts to define the structure of the narrative in terms of the relationships between minimal narrative units, and the combinations which these units produce.

The limitations of this method, and of any method of literary analysis, lie in the observation that the descriptions and definitions of the object of study (i.e. the text) are as varied as the human imagination. As with most areas of scholarship, the object of study is dependent upon the framework in which it is studied. The automobile, for example, presents a different object of study to the sociologist than it does to the mechanical engineer. Yet both are acceptable descriptions of the automobile. In the same manner, the text may be described and interpreted by two different methods which reach different conclusions and yet both may be acceptable descriptions of the text. The limitations of any method of literary analysis therefore lie in whether it can provide an acceptable

¹The basic sources for Todorov's theory of narrative structure are the section on narrative syntax in *Poétique* (1968:67-85); his book *Grammaire du Decameron* (1969), which provides the fullest explanation of his theory; and an article, "La grammaire du récit," published in the collection of essays entitled *Poétique de la Prose* (1971).

description of the text under study. The method followed in this paper and the conclusions which it produces are therefore subject to these limitations. I believe that it does provide an acceptable description of the text and that it provides an appropriate means for entering into what the text has to say. The reader will have to judge for himself.

In order to study the structure of a narrative, it is first necessary to present the structure in the form of a resumé, else it only serves to repeat the narrative itself. The problem, as Todorov sees it, is to arrive at an appropriate description of the units of narrative structure and the relations which exist between them (1968:77).

Todorov's understanding of the minimal literary unit and relationships of literary structure owes a great deal to the work of the Russian Formalist school² of literary critics. In particular, Boris Tomachevski's essay entitled "Thematics" (1965) presents a number of the concepts which form the basis for Todorov's understanding of narrative structure.

Tomachevski sees the motif as the theme of the smallest unit of narrative. The statement, "The king is dead." forms its own proper motif, which becomes the smallest definable unit of the

²For a thorough introduction to the history and theory of the Russian Formalist school, see Victor Erlich's excellent book Russian Formalism: History--Doctrine (1969). Several collections of essays are available in English, of which the most comprehensive is Readings in Russian Poetics, edited by L. Matejka and K. Pomorska, although it does not provide a translation of Tomachevski's essay "Thematics."

narrative. Motifs combine in two possible and simultaneous ways. The chronological and causal combination of motifs creates what Tomachevski calls the story (fabula); the successive combination of motifs in the work itself is called the plot (syuzhet).³ The events of the real world which the narrative describes form the story and the way the narrative actually presents them forms the plot. This simple dichotomy between the correlation of the events in the "real" world and their relation in the narrative allows Tomachevski to observe that motifs are heterogenous. Certain motifs can be omitted from the narrative without affecting the causal relations which link the events. These are what he calls "free" motifs. Those motifs which cannot be excluded from the causal and chronological succession he labels "associated" motifs. Associated motifs are important for the story; free motifs are important for the consideration of the plot.

The other essential distinction which Tomachevski makes is between static and dynamic motifs. Dynamic motifs are those which change the situation and static motifs are those which describe the situation. Dynamic motifs are central to the motion of the story, and one is able to characterize the story as the passage from one situation to another. The structure of the story involves the dispersion of conflict and the creation of new conflicts. Typically, the end of the story consists of a situation where

³The two terms, fabula and syuzhet, underwent a considerable development amongst the Formalists and, as Todorov shows (1973:17), often acquired contradictory meanings amongst the various writers.

the conflicts are resolved and various interests are reconciled.

In a particularly important passage, Tomachevski characterizes the structure of the story:

Parfois nous observons une situation équilibrée au début de la fable (du type "Les héros vivaient paisiblement. Tout d'un coup, il est arrivé, etc."). Pour mettre en route la fable, on introduit des motifs dynamiques qui détruisent l'équilibre de la situation initiale. L'ensemble des motifs qui violent l'immobilité de la situation initiale et qui entament l'action s'appelle le noeud. Habituellement, le noeud détermine tout le déroulement de la fable et l'intrigue se réduit aux variations des motifs principaux introduits par le noeud (1965:274).

The story consists of situations of equilibrium which are destroyed by the introduction of dynamic motifs. The dynamic motif which "breaks open" the initially stable situation is called the crux, and typically the crux determines the unfolding of the story.

Tomachevski presents the basic elements of Todorov's theory of narrative structure. His distinctions between free and associated motifs, and dynamic and static motifs, and his description of story movement as the disruption of equilibrious states by dynamic motifs are all incorporated and elaborated in Todorov's theory.

Todorov begins by re-working the concept of motifs. As an example of a motif, he suggests, "The dragon captured the daughter of the king." Vladimir Propp (1968) has already argued that this is not the minimal unit of the narrative since it is itself decomposable into four elements: the dragon, the capture, the daughter, and the king. To rectify this situation, Propp introduced the criteria of variable and constant. Thus within the genre of fairytale, the capture remains constant while the figures of the dragon, the daughter and the king are variables, i.e., they may be replaced

by other characters who perform the same action. Whilst Todorov agrees with Propp's objection to the motif, he argues that the selection of what is variable and constant is dependent upon the establishment of a particular genre--such as the fairytale--and therefore not applicable to a general poetics of narrative. Rather than reduce the motif to functions, such as "to capture", Todorov would turn the original motif into a series of elementary propositions. The original motif, "The dragon captured the daughter of the king." becomes:

X is a young girl
Y is a king
X is the daughter of Y
Z is a dragon
Z captures Y

The minimal unit which results from the breakdown of the motif is called the narrative proposition. Each proposition in turn, consists of two parts, an agent (X, Y, Z...) and a predicate (...is a young girl).

The agent corresponds to the proper name. In the case of the proper name, the descriptive aspect is reduced to a minimum and the name becomes the agent for various descriptions and actions.

L'agent n'est donc pas celui qui peut accomplir
telle ou telle action, mais celui qui peut
devenir le sujet d'un predicat: sa definition
est purement formelle (1969:28).

In effect, the agent is a figure to whom actions are attributed and to whom states are ascribed.

The predicate can be of two types. The first type corresponds

to the grammatical category of the adjective. It describes a particular state of the agents and acts in an attributive manner. "X is a young girl" is an agent with an attributive predicate. The second type of predicate is the equivalent of the grammatical category of the verb. It describes the action of the agent. "Z captures Y" is an example of a verbal predicate.

Attributive and verbal predicates correspond to the categories of static and dynamic motifs which Tomachevski identified, but Todorov has shown that there is a grammatical basis for the distinction of agents and predicates allows us to make a comparison between several agents who all perform the same action, or describe the contiguity of one agent who performs several different actions.

The relations between propositions, which are the minimal units of narrative structure, are of three types. The first is the causal relation in which the primary conjunction is causation or implication. The second is the temporal relation. Here the conjunction of propositions is based on their temporal succession or simultaneity. The last type is the spatial relation. Here the conjunction of propositions is based on repetition, opposition, etc. These three types of combination have already been noted in connection with Tomachevski's distinction between story and plot. It should be noted here that Todorov disagrees with the assumption that there is a pre-narrative story which guides the construction of the plot. The spatial succession of propositions in the narrative--the plot--is not dependent upon a pre-existent causal and chronological succession of propositions--the story. As Todorov notes, "The fable (story) is a pure construction thought up by the reader" (1973:18). This

is not to say that the story does not exist, but rather that it follows from the organization of propositions in the plot and not vice versa.

Propositions combine to form the next unit of narrative structure which is the sequence. Here the destruction of the initial stable state by the dynamic motif--which Tomachevski saw as the principal motive in the unfolding of the story--becomes the basis for a definition of the sequence. Propositions do not form infinite chains, but combine in cycles which the reader recognizes intuitively. The limit of the sequence is marked by the transformation of the initial proposition, and is always and only composed of five propositions. The ideal narrative would commence with a stable situation, which would be disturbed by some action. This would result in an unstable state, which by some directive action would be restored to a state of equilibrium. The initial and final states are similar but never identical. Thus the sequence involves:

A stable state
disruptive action
An unstable state
directive action
A stable state

The interrelation of action and states consequently involves two types of episodes; those which describe a state, and those which describe the transition from one state to another. These correspond respectively to attributive and verbal propositions.

The abstract nature of the sequence means that there will almost always be propositions within the narrative which do not

enter into the basic schema. Here Tomachevski's notion of free and associated motifs becomes a useful observation, for certain motifs (or in our case, propositions) may be omitted without destroying the succession of the narrative. Associated propositions are ones which figure in the development of the sequence.

The identification of the proposition as the minimal unit of narrative syntax, the discussion of the types of relations which exist between propositions, and the description of the sequence form the basis of Todorov's theory of narrative structure. The following example will show how it can be applied to a given narrative, and will show the symbolic representation of propositions and their relationships.

Gen. 22:1-13 provides a short narrative which is easily analysed in terms of the narrative structure which Todorov describes. The binding of Isaac presents us with a sequence in which the initial state consists of two propositions: Abraham has a son and God decides to test Abraham. The disruptive action occurs when God tells Abraham to take his son Isaac, his only son whom he loves and offer him as a sacrifice upon a mountain in Moriah. The medial state is constituted by Abraham's obedience to God's command. The tension in the medial state derives from the opposition of Abraham's love for his son with his fear of God. The directive action of the messenger's call prevents the resolution of the tension by commanding Abraham not to do anything to the boy. The final state involves the conclusion to God's testing--for he now knows that Abraham does fear him--and the proposition: Abraham has a son.

In an abbreviated form, the narrative sequence reads:

Abraham has a son; God decides to test Abraham

God tells Abraham to offer his son as a
sacrifice in the land of Moriah

Abraham is obedient

God stops Abraham from sacrificing his son
by sending a messenger

God knows that Abraham fears him; Abraham
has a son.

We can present this narrative sequence in symbolic form.

In so doing we can more clearly illustrate the similarity and opposition of the narrative propositions. The agents in the narrative sequence are Abraham and God and we assign them the symbols A and G. The action in the narrative is "offering for sacrifice," which we indicate as F. Three states relate to the offering for sacrifice; these are "having a son" (S), "being obedient" (O), and "knowing" (K). The narrative sequence which we described above can thus be written as:

$$\underline{AS} + \underline{G-K} \Rightarrow (\underline{AF})_{\text{statG}} + \underline{AO} + (\underline{A-F} \Rightarrow \underline{GK})_{\text{statG}} + \underline{AS}$$

The initial state of the narrative sequence involves two propositions, one implicit (AS) and one explicit (G-K). Abraham has a son is a necessary presupposition of the entire narrative and forms one of the initial propositions. God's testing is a function of God's knowing, as v. 12 clearly shows, and so God's decision to test Abraham is written as G-K. The minus sign indicates the negation or opposition of the following symbol. God's not knowing causes him to tell Abraham to sacrifice his son, which involves the statement from G. The arrow indicates a relation of causation or implication and the brackets, followed by "stat"

indicate that what is within the brackets is spoken and G following indicates that the statement is from God. Abraham's obedience is written AO, and simply follows in temporal succession from God's statement, hence the addition sign. The directive action is another message from God, which tells Abraham not to sacrifice his son (A-F) because God knows that Abraham fears him (GK). The concluding state is therefore GK + AS; God knows and Abraham has a son.

A comparison of the initial, medial and final states of Abraham reveals that nothing changes for him. At the beginning he has a son, throughout the narrative he has a son, and at the end he still has a son. The instability of the medial state arises from the tension between Abraham's love for his son (which is made explicit in v. 2) and his fear of God. Yet the outcome is never really in question, for Abraham moves immediately to obey God's command. On the other hand, God's state changes completely within the narrative. Initially, he does not know if Abraham fears him, and at the end he does know. It is the very stability of Abraham's position which alters God's perception of him.

The above presentation shows how the analysis of the II Kings 5 will proceed in the second part of the paper. In addition it gives a brief introduction to the development of the symbols and signs from the basic narrative propositions. The relevant symbols for our analysis of II Kings 5, and diagrams of the narrative sequences which we identify are included at the end of the paper in Appendix I.

CHAPTER II
TEXT AND TRANSLATION

¹Now Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man before his lord and well respected, for through him Yahweh had given victory to Aram, but the man was an important noble stricken with leprosy. ² And Aramean raiders had gone out and captured a young girl from the land of Israel, and she served the wife of Naaman ³ and she said to her mistress, "If only my lord were before the prophet who is in Samaria, then he would cure him of his leprosy." ⁴ So he came and told his lord saying, "Thus and thus spoke the girl from the land of Israel." ⁵ And the king of

v. ¹ J. MacDonald (1976:159n) suggests that there is more to the expression לְנִי לְנִי than has been suggested by the translations "a man of wealth" (cf. RSV Ruth 2:1, I Sam. 9:1) or "mighty man of valour" (cf. RSV II Kg. 5:1, Jud. 6:12). Whilst MacDonald simply notes this in passing, it appears that לְנִי לְנִי has specific social implications which go beyond a general physical description.

v. ² In a recent article on the word לְנִי, J. MacDonald has shown that the common translations of (1) child, lad, young man; (2) servant are both inadequate and produce a false impression of the person so described. MacDonald demonstrates that the word conveys a particular status and role in Israelite society. In particular, the לְנִי serves in a position which MacDonald sees as similar to the function of the squire in medieval society, i.e., a young boy or man of good birth who serves a person of slightly higher social status. He therefore suggests translating לְנִי with the word "squire." Unfortunately "squire" as archaic connotations which do not suit the Israelite society of the period. The translation of לְנִי with "girl" here is conventional but the reader is asked to bear in mind the specific social implications of the description לְנִי.

Aram said, "Go, come and I will send a letter to the king of Israel." So he went and took with him ten talents of silver and six thousand shekels of gold and ten changes of clothes.⁶ And he brought the letter to the king of Israel which said, "Now when this letter comes to you, then I have sent to you Naaman, my servant, so cure him of his leprosy."⁷ But when the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, "Am I god, to cause death and give life, that this is sent to me, to cure a man of his leprosy? So now know and see that he seeks occasion against me."⁸ Now when Elisha, the man of God, heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent to the king saying, "Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come to me and know that there is a prophet in Israel."⁹ So Naaman came with his cavalry and chariotry and he stood at the entrance to Elisha's house.¹⁰ And Elisha sent a messenger to him saying, "Go, wash seven times in the Jordan and your skin will return to you and be clean."¹¹ Then Naaman was angry and he went and said, "Now I said to myself, surely he will come forth and stand and call in the name of Yahweh, his god and move his hand to the place, and cure the leprosy."¹² Are not the Abana and the Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Can I not wash in them and be clean?" So he turned and went in anger.¹³ But his servants approached and spoke to him and said, "My father, if the prophet asked a great thing of you, would you not comply? So how much more if he says to you, 'Wash and be clean'?"¹⁴ So he went down and dipped in the Jordan seven times according to the word of the man of God and his skin became like the skin of a young boy and he was clean.¹⁵ Then he returned to the man of God,

he and all his company, and he stood before him and said, "now indeed, I know that there is no god in all the land except in Israel. So now take a present from your servant." ¹⁶ But he said, "As Yahweh lives, whom I stand before, I will not take." He pressed him to accept but he refused. ¹⁷ So Naaman said, "If not, let two mules' burdens of earth be given to your servant, for your servant will no longer make offerings or sacrifices to other gods, except to Yahweh. ¹⁸ For this matter may Yahweh pardon your servant: when my lord comes to Beth Rimmon to worship there, and he leans upon my hand and I worship in Beth Rimmon; when I worship in Beth Rimmon, may Yahweh pardon your servant in this matter." ¹⁹ So he said to him, "Go in peace." Now he went from him a short distance ²⁰ and Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, the man of God, said, "Since my lord has refrained from taking what Naaman, the Aramean brought, as Yahweh lives, I will run after him and take something from him." ²¹ So Gehazi pursued after Naaman, and Naaman saw him running after him and he got down from his chariot to meet him and said, "Is all well?" ²² And he said, "All is well. My lord has sent me saying, 'Now this has come up. Two young men have come from the hill country of Ephraim, from the sons of the prophets. Please give to them a talent of silver and two changes of clothing.'" ²³ So Naaman said, "Please,

v. 19 Gehazi is a גלגל to Elisha, and the translation as "servant" here does not fully cover the position of responsibility which גלגל implies. Cf. Gen. 18:7, I Sam. 9:27. See MacDonald (1976:148f.).

v. 21 The MT reads וַיֵּרְאָהוּ which is "and he saw." Our translation here follows the Grr, which read καὶ εἶδεν αὐτόν which is the equivalent of וַיֵּרְאָהוּ, "and he saw him."

take two talents." And he pressed him and he tied up two talents of silver in two bags and two changes of clothes and he gave them to two of his young men and they carried them before him. ²⁴ And he came to the citadel, took from their hand and deposited in his house, and sent the men away and they went. ²⁵ Then he came and stood in front of his lord and Elisha said to him, "Have you been anywhere, Gehazi?" and he said, "Your servant did not go here or there." ²⁶ So he said to him, "Did my heart not go with you when a man turned from upon his chariot to meet you? And now you have taken the silver, to take orchards and olive-trees and vineyards and sheep and cattle and male-servants and female-servants. ²⁷ So the leprosy of Naaman will cling to you and your descendants forever." So he went forth from before him, stricken with leprosy like snow.

v. 26 For the MT לָקַח , the Grr read $\kappa\alpha\iota \nu\upsilon\nu \epsilon\lambda\alpha\beta\epsilon\varsigma$ which is the equivalent of לָקַח . Benzinger (1899:139) argues that לָקַח , "was it time?" makes no sense, so he concludes that לָקַח (as with לָקַח) = לָקַח , "even now." The Grr reading of $\kappa\alpha\iota \nu\upsilon\nu$ would support such an emendation. In lieu of the infinitive לָקַח , Benzinger would read the second person, masculine singular perfect of לָקַח , which involves no changes to the consonantal text. The reading of the MT suggests that at some time the acquisition of gifts would be appropriate; a suggestion which is not borne out by Elisha's firm refusal in v. 16.. The reading of the Grr suggests simply a correlation between Gehazi's acquisition of the gift from Naaman and his affliction with Naaman's leprosy, hence our translation.

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS AND COMMENTS ON II KG. 5

The narrative structure of II Kg. 5 involves the inter-relation of three primary agents; Elisha, Naaman and Gehazi. Elisha is the motivator, whose actions in the form of speaking or sending a message produce changes in the status of Gehazi or Naaman. By change in status, we mean the transition from one state to another. This transition forms the basis of Todorov's definition of the sequence, as we noted above (p. 7). The overall sequence of the narrative will necessarily reflect the states of Naaman and Gehazi, since these are the only one which change.

The affliction with leprosy provides both the initial and final states of the narrative. The overall sequence of the narrative is:

initial stable state: Naaman is נָאָמָן

disruptive action: Elisha sends a message

medial unstable state: Naaman is נָאָמָן

directive action: Elisha places a curse on Gehazi

final stable state: Gehazi is גִּיזָּה .

Each of these propositions can be written in symbolic terms. Naaman's initial state, in which he is afflicted with leprosy, is written as NA. The disruptive action which results in the alteration of Naaman's initial state is the conditional statement

which Elisha sends in a message to Naaman. This is written (N-S
NC) condE. If Naaman will make himself subordinate to Elisha
 by acknowledging the word of the prophet and washing in the Jordan,
 then he will be clean. The unstable state which results arises
 because Naaman becomes clean, yet he is not cured of his leprosy.
 Naaman's initial state is NA, and the cure for his leprosy would
 be N-A. But Naaman's dip in the Jordan makes him clean, and this
 is written NC. This state, in which Naaman is clean but not cured,
 is only resolved through Elisha's action in afflicting Gehazi with
 the leprosy of Naaman. This action is written (G-S \Rightarrow G[NA]) statE.
 In taking the silver from Naaman, Gehazi contradicts the earlier
 expressed refusal of Elisha, and therefore the leprosy of Naaman
 will, also, cling to him. This is written GA. Gehazi's affliction
 with the leprosy of Naaman is the resolution of Naaman's clean-
 liness without a cure. The implication of N-A which is suggested
 by Naaman's cleanliness, becomes effective when Elisha afflicts
 Gehazi with the leprosy of Naaman. Elisha's action results in the
 paradoxical situation in which Naaman is free of his leprosy yet
 his leprosy still remains in the figure of Gehazi.

The symbolic representation of the actions and states in
 the narrative allows us to illustrate several points about the
 narrative structure. Both Naaman's cure (NC) and Gehazi's afflic-
 tion (GA) are transformations of Naaman's initial state of afflic-
 tion (NA). In both cases, the action which brings about the
 transformation is Elisha's speaking. In the first case, Naaman's
 acknowledgement of the authority of Elisha is the necessary condition

for his cleanliness. In the second case, Gehazi's disregard for the authority of Elisha, when he accepts something which Elisha refused to accept, is the cause of his affliction. The acceptance and disregard for Elisha's authority results in cleansing and affliction respectively.

In terms of the overall sequence of the narrative, we can formulate a very clear correlation between the actions of accepting and disregarding prophetic authority and the states of affliction and cleanliness. Acceptance of Elisha's word produces the state of cleanliness. Disregard for the word of Elisha leads to affliction.

Gehazi's transformation from an initial state of cleanliness to a state of affliction through his disregard of the authority of the prophet Elisha--and by implication, the authority of YHWH--presents a parallel to Miriam's affliction in Num. 12.

In Num. 12, Miriam and Aaron speak out against the authority of Moses, arguing that they are in an equal position with him. YHWH calls them together and indicates that they are not equals of Moses, because he speaks face-to-face with Moses and not in dark visions as with other prophets. YHWH then afflicts Miriam with leprosy.

Miriam's initial state is cleanliness, and this is written MC. Through her refusal to acknowledge the authority of Moses, YHWH becomes angry and she is stricken with leprosy, which we write as M-S \Rightarrow MA. Miriam's final state is then MA; Miriam afflicted. If we compare this with Gehazi's transformation from clean to afflicted, we see that they follow the same sequence.

GC: Gehazi is clean

MC: Miriam is clean

(G-S \Rightarrow GA) statE: Gehazi
rejects Elisha's
authority

M-S \Rightarrow MA: Miriam rejects
the authority of Moses

GA: Gehazi is afflicted

MA: Miriam is afflicted

The transition is from clean to afflicted, and the cause in each case is the refusal to acknowledge the authority of YHWH, or his representative.¹

The sequence which we identify above, and which is the more common transformation,² is the reverse of the sequence of Naaman's cleansing. Naaman's initial state is affliction (NA). Through his acknowledgement of the authority of Elisha's word, he is made clean. His submission to Elisha is the condition of his cleansing, and so this is written (N-S \Rightarrow NC) condE. Naaman's final state is then NC.

The difficulty with Naaman's transformation from afflicted to clean lies with the problem of motivation. Naaman's initial state is affliction, and his leprosy is presented in the narrative as a given. The reason, if any, which lies behind his leprous state is not a consideration for the narrative. Yet this is a particularly unsatisfying position in terms of a general correlation between affliction and transgression. We expect that Naaman's

¹The parallel between the two sequences is also indicated by the verbal parallel in the description of the affliction of Miriam and Gehazi. They were both $\text{לְמַעַן} \text{לְמַעַן}$.

²Cf. II Kg. 15:5 = II Chr. 26:20ff., and more generally, the assumption in Job that affliction and transgression are intimately and

leprosy is the result of some transgression, and we are not told the nature of his offence. On the contrary, the narrative is explicit in describing his social prominence and well-being, and his good standing with the people of Aram and his king. This anomalous situation is further enhanced by Elisha's unmotivated action in telling Naaman of the means by which he may become clean. Both Naaman's affliction and his cure appear unmotivated in terms of the narrative, and contrary to expectation.³

This lack of motivation with regard to the transformation of Naaman's status stands in opposition to the motivation and expected action in the case of Gehazi's change of state. Elisha's action in response to Gehazi's disregard of his authority is completely in keeping with expectations regarding transgression and affliction. Elisha's action is motivated by a regard for the authority of YHWH, and is expected.

From our analysis of the overall sequence of the narrative, it can be seen that Naaman's transition from afflicted to clean, and Gehazi's transition from clean to afflicted, provide in themselves two separate sequences. Moreover, Naaman's face-to-face encounter with Elisha in vv. 15-19, and Gehazi's face-to-face encounter with Elisha in vv. 25-27, both present denouements to the sequence of events which precede them. In order to examine the narrative in more detail, we will now consider vv. 1-19, and vv. 15-27 as separate sequences. (See diagram in Appendix I.)

³This is not to say that Naaman's affliction and cure are without a purpose (cf. p. 46) but rather that in terms of the

The narrative opens with a description of Naaman, expressed in terms which fall into two categories. Most of the description concerns Naaman's social position and presents the picture of an important and favoured Aramean noble. Naaman is commander of the army, he is an לִּיטָלֵךְ before his lord, he is much esteemed, YHWH's instrument of Aramean victory and a לִּיטָלֵךְ .

The lone word at the conclusion of the description must stand in a category by itself. $\text{וְנִסָּה$ is a negative attribute.⁴ Its occurrence at the end of the description suggests that it is an afterthought of little consequence. Yet as we will see, the consequences of leprosy far outweigh the effect of Naaman's social position.

Naaman's description in v. 1 provides us with two propositions. The attributes which describe his social position form the proposition: Naaman is an important servant of the king of Aram. This is written symbolically as NS. Naaman's description as stricken with leprosy

⁴As Montgomery (1951:373) notes, the Hebrew term covers a very broad variety of symptoms. Both וְנִסָּה and the LXX and New Testament equivalent λεπροα are not limited to Hansen's disease, which is leprosy proper. The symptoms of the disease described in Lev. 13 and 14 cover itches, boils and eruptions as well as mold on the surface of walls in houses. Certain forms of leprosy prohibited free association with society, cf. II Kg. 7:3-10, II Chr. 26:19-21, whilst others were permitted to remain in society despite the affliction; cf. Gehazi's case here and apparently in II Kg. 8:1ff., and Miriam in Num. 12:14. Whether this distinction is attributable to a difference in the disease is not certain. It is important to note that the measures described in Lev. 13 and 14 are not intended as a cure but simply as purification after the disease has subsided. The affliction and cure of leprosy and other diseases lies entirely within the realm of man of God and YHWH, (cf. Y Kaufmann, The Religion of Israel, tr. M. Greenberg (1960) p. 106f.).

forms the proposition: Naaman is afflicted. This is written symbolically as NA.

In v. 3, Naaman, through his wife, receives a message from a young girl who is a servant in his household.⁵ This message provides the motivation for Naaman's journey to Israel and establishes the direction of the sequence. The motive comes from the girl's indication that there might be a cure for Naaman's leprosy in Israel. Up until this point, there has been little indication that leprosy plays a significant role in the sequence of the narrative. The casual⁶ manner in which Naaman is described as leprous in v. 1 is to blame for this uncertainty.

The narrator presents the bearer of the message, i.e., the young girl, in a subordinate position to Naaman. Yet the description of the girl as נערה קנאנית serves to indicate her previously important social position in the land of Israel. From a formerly important social position to the status of a slave girl, the girl's change in status foreshadows the change which Naaman will have to accept in order to cure his leprosy.

The girl's message expresses a conditional clause.⁷ "If

⁵The difficulty of who conveys the message to Naaman, and how the message is conveyed to the king of Aram has been mentioned in our textual notes (p. 11).

⁶The use of the word casual here is intended only to imply that the occurrence of נאמן at the end of a long list of descriptions of the character Naaman is syntactically unimpressive. Naaman's leprosy is not described in tragic terms but casually, which manner serves to deter the reader from seeing leprosy as the focus of the narrative.

⁷Cf. the use of אם in Gen. 24:42, II Sam. 19:7 et al. Also note the only other use of the word אם in Ps. 119:5 where, in conjunction with אם, it expresses a condition.

my lord were before the prophet in Samaria, then he would cure him of his leprosy." The use of לפני , in close proximity to its use in vv. 1 and 2, where it indicates a relationship of subordination, gives us a clue to the first part of the conditional clause. The word לפני bears two meanings in this context. Naaman is to be before Elisha in the physical sense, but he is also to be subordinate to him. These are the conditions necessary to bring about the second part of the clause.

The use of לפני serves to emphasize the point which is indicated by לפני . The girl's statement reverses the earlier order of לפני לפני in v. 1; it is no longer "before his lord" (i.e., Naaman before the king of Aram) but "my lord before the prophet" (i.e., Naaman before Elisha). Naaman is to exchange his subordinate position to the king of Aram for a subordinate position before the prophet in Samaria.

The condition which the girl expresses can be written as a proposition involving the two initial propositions. Naaman must become subordinate to the prophet in Samaria, which involves the denial of his status in Aram, and so this is written N-S. If this condition is fulfilled, then the prophet will cure (and perhaps "remove") Naaman's leprosy, effecting N-A. Since this is expressed as a condition, both parts are joined and written as $(\text{N-S} \Rightarrow \text{N-A}) \text{condM}$.

Vv. 4-8 present a supplementary element in terms of the narrative sequence: a satirical aside which highlights the limits of monarchical power and emphasizes the king of Israel's failure to understand the prophet. We will consider this section of the narrative at the conclusion of our discussion of the larger narrative

sequences.

In v. 9, Naaman comes to the door of the house of Elisha. It is significant that Naaman does not stand before the prophet himself. The medial position which Naaman occupies in v. 9 represents an unstable state in terms of the stable states of affliction (v. 1) and cleanliness (v. 14). Naaman is still afflicted with leprosy, but he is on the verge of becoming clean and this state presents the possibility of being clean. As such, the narrative can go two ways. Naaman can go on to accept the word Elisha and become clean, or he can refuse to acknowledge the authority and power of the prophetic word and remain leprous. Naaman's arrival at the door of Elisha presents the transition from Aram and the kings to Israel and the prophet. We indicate the potential and transitional nature of this state symbolically as NTr.

In v. 10, Elisha sends a messenger to Naaman who tells him to wash in the Jordan seven times and be clean.⁸ Elisha presents Naaman with a conditional message, but one which is different from the message in v. 3. If Naaman will accept the prophetic word, and wash seven times in the Jordan, then he will be clean. Naaman's cleanliness is dependent upon his acknowledgement of the power and authority of the prophet. But the predicted result of his submission to the will of the prophet is different from the result predicted in v. 3. Here Naaman will become clean; in v. 3 he was

⁸ Note the Levitical character of the language used to describe the manner in which Naaman may become clean (cf. Lev. 13 and 14). Here Elisha takes the language of the Levitical purification ritual as the model for the cure or possibly vice versa.

to be cured of his leprosy. It is this ambiguity in the messages which results in the instability of Naaman's cleanliness, as we noted above (p. 13f.). The result of this ambiguity is that it requires another act on the part of Elisha to resolve the instability, in the transfer of Naaman's leprosy to Gehazi (v. 27).

Elisha's message to Naaman employs an opening phrase which is found amongst other prophetic messages. The combination of אֵלֹהִים with the converted perfect second person singular verb occurs elsewhere (e.g., II Sam. 24:12, Is. 38:5, Jer. 2:2) and indicates a message from YHWH to his prophet. Its use here is unique in that it is Elisha, and not YHWH, who sends the message. Similarly, the message is given to a foreigner and an enemy of Israel and not to a prophet.⁹

A comprehensive understanding of the figure of Elisha would require a thorough study of all the material in the Elijah/Elisha narratives, and would extend beyond the bounds of this paper. Nevertheless, we can illustrate some of the significant characteristics which bear upon Elisha as agent in the narrative. As we noted above (p. 13), Elisha is the motivator in the narrative. In particular, his actions are presented in their own right and not as the result of Elisha's mediation of YHWH's will. In keeping with his function as motivator, Elisha forms the physical centre

⁹ Elisha's use of the form of expression which is elsewhere used by YHWH raises the question of the nature of Elisha's power. Whether Elisha can work miracles in his own right or whether he is only the instrument of YHWH is an issue which is not resolved by the narrative. The problem is compounded by the attribution of Naaman's cleansing to the word of the man of God (v. 14).

of the movement in the narrative. Naaman and Gehazi come to Elisha and they go forth from Elisha, but Elisha himself does not move. Both his function as motivator and his fixed stability in the geography of the narrative focus the emphasis on the figure of Elisha. The apparent importance of Naaman and Gehazi, in their moving about and the changes in their status, only serves to indicate the determinative force of Elisha's few actions.

As we have already noted, the message which Elisha sends to Naaman is of a conditional nature. The message is a command but the action and the result stand in a causal relationship.¹⁰ The first part of the condition, which implies an acceptance of the prophetic word, is written symbolically as N-S. The second part of the conditional clause describes the result of Naaman's obedience and is written as NC. Since these are expressed in the form of a message, the whole forms the proposition $(\underline{N-S} \Rightarrow \underline{NC})_{\text{condM}}$.

In v. 14, Naaman fulfills the conditions of Elisha's message and his skin becomes like that of a young boy and he is clean. Naaman accepts the manner of the cure and accepts the power of the prophetic word which results in his cleanliness.

The description of Naaman's healed flesh as like the flesh of a ןלך ךלך reflects the description of the young girl in v. 2.

¹⁰ The nature of the cure described is markedly different from the cure of the Shunemite woman's son in II Kg. 4:33-34. In our narrative, the cure is effected without Elisha's direct intervention against the illness. He simply sends a message to Naaman telling him that he will be clean if he washes in the Jordan. In II Kg. 4, it is the direct physical intervention of Elisha which produces the cure of the child.

This verbal connection with the girl promotes the image of a lower and subordinate position for Naaman. Just as the young girl was taken from Israel to be a servant of Naaman in Aram, so Naaman has come from Aram to be a servant of Elisha in Israel. The comparison of superior in Aram with subordinate in Israel is made even stronger by the contrast of Naaman's description as נַעַר קִטָּן with his earlier description as אִישׁ גָּדוֹל and גִּבּוֹר חֵיל. Naaman's transition from afflicted to clean parallels his transition from superior to subordinate.

Naaman's transition from afflicted to clean is the concluding state and is written as NC. It represents the fulfillment of the words of Elisha in v. 10. Yet Naaman's encounter with Elisha does not end here, and continues on to a face-to-face encounter between Elisha and Naaman. Whilst Naaman's cleansing is the logical conclusion of a story about leprosy, and we have presented it as such, the continuation indicates that there is more to the narrative than a description of the miraculous cure of Naaman's disease.

In v. 15, Naaman returns and stands before Elisha. His return with the specific description יָרֵעַחֲדָלֶנִי is the fulfillment of the girl's statement in v. 3. Naaman has finally come and stands before the prophet in physical as well as social terms. His self-description as לַבַּיִת at the end of v. 15 only serves to emphasize his subordinate position.

Naaman acknowledges the superior nature of the God of Israel and asks that Elisha accept a gift from him. Elisha refuses the offer, invoking his relationship with YHWH as the reason. Naaman then asks that he be given two mules' loads of earth because

he will no longer sacrifice to any god except YHWH, and he asks that YHWH pardon him when he worships with his lord in the house of Rimmon. Elisha assents to the requests¹¹ and Naaman goes on his way.

Naaman has accepted the word of the prophet and acknowledged his subordinate position, and he has acknowledged the superiority of the God of Israel. We have already suggested that this state be written N-S. Now Naaman requests that he be allowed to continue to worship in the house of Rimmon, at the arm of his lord. The use of ׀׀׀׀ makes explicit Naaman's desire to remain subservient to the king of Aram, and still worship in the house of Rimmon. In effect, Naaman would like to retain the status which he had before he left Aram (NS) and also worship YHWH and obey his prophet (N-S).

Elisha's assent establishes a paradox. On the one hand, Naaman's cleansing is dependent upon his submission to the will of the prophet. On the other hand, Naaman is still able to be a subordinate of the king of Aram and to worship in the house of Rimmon, and yet remain clean. Elisha's assent to the request of Naaman produces N-S + NS simultaneously.

As we shall see in the case of Gehazi, Elisha's acknowledgement of N-S + NS does not eliminate the correlation between submission and cleansing. The correlation is still in effect, but the power of Elisha is such that he can defeat it and acknowledge

¹¹Cf. a similar request in II Sam. 15:7-9, and the manner of assent.

Naaman's request.

The denouement after Naaman's cleansing works to defeat our expectations. We expect that Naaman cannot serve both Elisha and the king of Aram; YHWH and Rimmon, yet Elisha assents to this situation. The denouement also serves to reduce Naaman's acceptance of the prophetic word and his subsequent cleansing to a secondary consideration in the narrative. Elisha's assent to Naaman's request obviates the condition of Naaman's acceptance and subordination to the prophet in order to be clean, since Naaman can still serve the king of Aram and remain clean. Vv. 1-19 serve to say more about the prophet Elisha than they do about the miraculous cure of Naaman's leprosy.

V. 15 introduces the denouement to vv. 1-14, but it also provides the initial proposition of the second sequence (vv. 15-27). In this manner, v. 15 serves as a transition from the first sequence to the second. Naaman's acknowledgement of the God of Israel is a continuation of the submission/cleansing pattern which guided the first sequence. Naaman's offer of the gift to Elisha introduces the principle motif of the second sequence.¹²

¹²Naaman's offer of a gift evokes the image of another offer of a gift. In Gen. 33:11, Jacob says to Esau, "Please take my gift which is brought to you, for God has favoured me and I have enough." And he pressed him and he took. In Gen. 33, Esau accepts the offer which Jacob makes but in II Kg. 5, Elisha refuses to accept Naaman's offer. The similarity in offering a gift--and the reason for the offer--contrasts with Esau's acceptance and Elisha's refusal. The different responses arise out of the relationships which exist between Jacob and Esau on the one hand, and Naaman and Elisha on the other. Both Jacob and Naaman appear in a manner of submission. Their offer of a gift is an attempt to equalize the debt which they owe. Jacob has twice supplanted his brother and taken his נֶכֶדָה which he now offers back. Naaman has been cleansed by the word

Naaman's offer is the initial proposition and forms the stable state. It presents Naaman's attempt at fulfilling his obligation to the prophet through an appropriate action (cf. the anticipation of this offer in v. 5). In terms of our symbolic shorthand, we write this initial proposition as NO.

In v. 16, Elisha expresses his refusal of the gift. He says, "As YHWH lives, before whom I stand, I will not take." Naaman urges him but he refuses. Elisha specifically evokes his relationship with YHWH as the reason for his refusal of the gift. The implication of Elisha's refusal of the gift is that it would be some reflection upon his relationship with YHWH to accept. The specific effect which the acceptance of the offer of Naaman would have upon Elisha's relationship with YHWH is unknown, and perhaps unknowable. We can suggest that in terms of the relation between acceptance and submission with Naaman's acceptance of the prophetic word and Gehazi's acceptance of Naaman's gift establishes, that Elisha's acceptance of Naaman's gift would reflect negatively upon his relationship with YHWH.

In terms of the symbolic presentation of the narrative sequence, Elisha's refusal is written as $(\underline{ES} \Rightarrow \underline{E-T})_{statE}$. Elisha invokes his relationship with YHWH (ES) which implies his decision not to take (E-T). All of this is contained in a statement which

12 (cont'd.) of Elisha. Esau's acceptance of Jacob's offer places them on equal footing, acknowledging the rights of Jacob. Elisha's refusal of Naaman's offer leaves the relationship unchanged. Naaman is still in a position of obligation which will only change --from Naaman's perspective--with Gehazi's acceptance in v. 24.

Elisha makes to Naaman.

Naaman leaves Elisha in v. 19, his offer of a gift refused and his own request fulfilled. This position presents the medial state of the sequence. Naaman leaves Elisha totally under obligation to the prophet, who has made him clean and granted his request whilst refusing to take the only compensation which Naaman could offer. As the medial proposition it is an unstable state. Naaman's leaving concludes his encounters with Elisha,¹³ and prepares the way for his encounter with Gehazi. It presents the transitional state between the prophet's refusal of the gift and Gehazi's acceptance. The potential is there for Naaman to simply return to Aram, or Gehazi can resolve to take something from Naaman. To indicate the transitional and potential nature of this state, we write NTr.

In v. 20, Gehazi enters the narrative sequence and his social position and relationship to Elisha are described. Gehazi is the 79] of Elisha. His position, while important, is clearly subordinate to Elisha.¹⁴

Gehazi resolves to rectify his master's refusal to accept

¹³Note that both Naaman's arrival before the prophet (v. 9) and his departure form the unstable states in the narrative sequences. In both cases, the movement to and from the prophet forms the transitional state.

¹⁴The use of 79] recalls both the description of Naaman in v. 14 and the description of the captive girl from Israel in v. 2. Whilst the parallel of Naaman's description with the young girl reflects favourably upon Naaman, the parallel between Gehazi's designation and the young girl reflects unfavourably upon his taking of the gift. The description as 79] serves to force a comparison amongst the actions of these three.

anything from Naaman. His use of ךָשָׁן to describe Elisha's refusal to accept the gift which Naaman offered reflects Gehazi's understanding of that action. ךָשָׁן is usually translated "kept back" or "spared," an indication of restraining. The object of restraint is usually a person (or people), followed by the action from which they are restrained commonly indicated by the preposition מִן (cf. I Sam. 25:39, II Sam. 18:16, Ps. 78:50 and Gen. 22:12; 16). The action of restraint is seen as a saving action, or when negated, as a condemning action. Of particular interest for our verse are Gen. 39:8ff. and I Sam. 12:4. In Gen. 39, Joseph refuses to take what is offered--Potiphar's wife--because nothing has been kept back (ךָשָׁן) from him. To accept would be an action against his lord and a sin against God. Similarly, in I Sam. 12:4 the fact that Samuel has not taken anything (מִן־הָאֲדָמָה) from anyone is held up as a sign of his righteousness. Gehazi's acquisition of the silver from Naaman is an action against his lord and a sign of his unrighteousness.

Gehazi's use of כִּי־יְהוָה suggests a comparison with the earlier use of the expression by Elisha (v. 16). Elisha invoked his relationship with YHWH as the cause of his refusal of Naaman's gift. His subordinate relationship to YHWH causes him to refuse the gift. Gehazi observes Elisha's refusal to accept the gift from Naaman but resolves to take something from Naaman. His use of the oath, through its connection with Elisha's decision not to take the gift, serves to emphasize the difference between the actions of Gehazi and Elisha.

Gehazi's resolution to take something from Naaman is written

as the statement (G-S \Rightarrow GT)_{statG}. Gehazi's insubordination in denying Elisha's earlier refusal of the gift (G-S) implies his resolution to take something (GT), which is ~~is~~ conveyed in a statement by Gehazi.

Gehazi rushes after Naaman, claiming to bring a request from Elisha, that Naaman give something to two sons of the prophets who have appeared from Ephraim. Gehazi bases his request upon a lie; it is clearly untrue since the narrator has made Gehazi's motivation for wanting a gift known in v. 20.

Naaman responds to Gehazi's request by urging him (נאמן) to take two talents of silver. He ties up the gifts and gives them to two of נאמן. The use of נאמן recalls the similar expression in v. 16. In both cases, Naaman urges someone to accept his offer and in the case of Elisha, he is refused but in the case of Gehazi, it is accepted. The alternation of the final two consonants in the words נאמן and נאמן calls attention to these sounds in other words in the narrative, most significantly in נאמן. Note that Naaman washes (נאמן) in order to be clean, that Gehazi runs (נאמן) after Naaman in order to deliver his false message and that Naaman ties up (נאמן) the money in two bags. The result is that the leprosy (נאמן) of Naaman clings to Gehazi and his descendants, and he becomes leprous (נאמן). The sound similarity between these words reinforces the connections between action and results. Naaman's washing removes his leprosy. Gehazi's running after Naaman leads to his affliction with leprosy. The alternation in the final two consonants of נאמן and נאמן also provides a graphic indication of the difference between Elisha and Gehazi responses

to Naaman's urging.

The concluding proposition of this narrative sequence is that Gehazi accepts the gift from Naaman. The unstable state of Naaman in v. 19 is resolved through Gehazi's acceptance. Naaman has relieved some of his obligation to Elisha by giving a gift to Gehazi who acts on behalf of Elisha. Gehazi's acceptance presents the sequential inclusion to Naaman's offering. This concluding statement is written GA. Yet the narrative does not end here, nor is the issue of the gift finished by Gehazi taking the money and leaving. Whilst Gehazi's acquisition of the gift is the conclusion of a story about how the greedy servant of the prophet acquired a gift, we expect his punishment. This is provided in vv. 25-27, but in such a way as to resolve the larger issue of Naaman's cleansing without being cured.

Vv. 25-27 provide the denouement to the second sequence in the narrative. Just as the denouement to the first sequence began with Naaman coming and standing before the prophet, so the denouement to the second sequence opens with Gehazi coming and standing before (but literally to) his lord. While both Naaman and Gehazi come (בא) and stand (עמד), Naaman stands before him (לפניו)--i.e., the man of God--while Gehazi stands before (לפני) his lord. The difference in the prepositions reflects the difference between Naaman's and Gehazi's relationships with Elisha. Naaman comes to Elisha fully acknowledging his subordinate position, and having obeyed the word of the prophet. He is before (לפניו) the prophet. Gehazi comes to Elisha, having rejected his subordinate

position and ignored the prophetic word, so he is before the prophet only in a physical sense (cf. the use of *לֹא יָדָע* in I Sam. 17:51, II Sam. 18:4 and I Kg. 20:38).

The parallel of Gehazi's and Naaman's actions in coming and standing establishes a correlation between the first and second denouements. In both, the narrative concerns the face-to-face encounter between Elisha and his subordinates. But Gehazi is a subordinate only in name (as the combination of *לֹא* and *יָדָע* indicates), whereas Naaman arrives as a true servant (as *עֶבֶד* indicates). The actions of Elisha in each denouement indicates that the prophet's role is directive and conclusive. Elisha is the agent who resolves the issues of submission and affliction.

Gehazi comes and stands before his lord, and Elisha asks him whether he has been anywhere. Gehazi answers that he has not gone here or there. Gehazi lies about his comings and goings to avoid the too obvious intent of Elisha's question. The question itself is almost rhetorical, particularly in light of v. 26. Elisha knows that Gehazi has been out to meet someone and asks only to determine Gehazi's response.¹⁵

After Gehazi's denial, Elisha presents him with his sure knowledge that Gehazi has indeed been out to meet someone. The

¹⁵Cf. Achan's response under similar circumstances in Jos. 7:20. Here Achan has taken some of the devoted things and hidden them under his tent, but when confronted by Joshua, he confesses and is punished.

nature of Elisha's power is such that he can describe almost exactly Gehazi's actions. This is indicated by the phrase, "a man turned from upon his chariot to meet you," which paraphrases the description of Naaman's actions in v. 21. Clearly, Elisha is aware of Gehazi's activities. Elisha states the nature of Gehazi's misdeed. He has taken silver and now he will take the orchards and olive trees and vineyards and sheep and cattle and men-servants and maid-servants. The problem here is whether the acquisition of the money in and of itself is the punishable offence or whether Elisha is concerned that one misdeed leads to another.

Within the context of the narrative, it is Gehazi's acceptance of the money which is the offence. It is the opposition between Elisha's refusal to accept anything from Naaman and Gehazi's willingness to accept something from Naaman which results in Gehazi's punishment. Beyond the confines of this particular narrative, the list of material which Elisha accuses Gehazi of wishing to acquire bears a resemblance to the list of acquisitions which Samuel ascribes to the king-to-be (I Sam. 8:10-18). If it is Gehazi's intended use of the money which is at fault, then perhaps Elisha is objecting to the social aspirations of Gehazi, and the attendant rejection of the prophetic authority.

As the result of his offence, Gehazi and his descendants are afflicted with the leprosy of Naaman. As we have suggested above (p. 16f.), Gehazi's affliction with the leprosy of Naaman provides the resolution of the cleansing of Naaman without his cure. Naaman's leprosy now resides in Gehazi and his descendants, and Naaman is now free of his own leprosy (i.e., N-A). The denouement.

to the second sequence presents us with the propositions GA (which is G[NA]) and N-A.

The prophet's action in afflicting Gehazi with the leprosy of Naaman results in the existence of Naaman's leprosy (in Gehazi) and the non-existence of Naaman's leprosy (in Naaman). Once again, Elisha's action has resulted in the paradoxical simultaneous existence of two opposite states. But in the denouement to the first narrative sequence, the paradox worked to defeat our expectations, whereas here it serves to fulfill our expectations. We expect to see Gehazi punished for his disregard for the prophetic word, and his affliction with the leprosy of Naaman seems a fitting contrast to the cleansing of Naaman in the face of the Naaman's acknowledgement of the prophetic word. It is appropriate that Naaman's cure should serve as the vehicle for Gehazi's punishment. While the two simultaneous states are nonetheless paradoxical, their existence serves to fulfill our expectations.

We have already noted (p. 22) that vv. 4-8 form a supplementary element in the terms of the narrative sequence. These verses describe in detail the means by which Naaman arrives in Israel and before the prophet Elisha. They provide a satirical look at the function of kings, in relation to the function of prophets and particularly contrast the king of Israel with the prophet Elisha.

The verses form an alternation between reported speech and direct speech, indicated by the use of 7DN7 in vv. 4, 6 and 8, and 7DN7 in vv. 5 and 7. The reported speeches consist of messages and the direct speeches are reactions to messages.

This pattern of message and reaction forms the constructive device of these verses.

In v. 4, Naaman comes to his lord and tells him what the girl from Israel has spoken.¹⁶ Both the use of גִּדְּלָהּ and לִאֲרָם indicate that the message which Naaman brings to the king of Aram is a repetition of the one which the girl told to Naaman's wife. In this instance, Naaman acts in the passive role of the messenger, conveying a message from one source to another.

V. 5 describes the king of Aram's reaction to the message which Naaman brings. Naaman has told him that there is a prophet in Samaria who can cure him of his leprosy. The king therefore commands Naaman to go, and he will send a message to the king of Israel. The assumption is that the way to approach the prophet is through his king. The narrative will show that the king of Aram's interpretation of the message in v. 4 is both wrong and inadequate. In the latter half of the verse, Naaman goes and takes with him silver, gold and clothes as gifts. As the king of Aram is wrong about the king/prophet relationship, so Naaman

¹⁶As we noted in our discussion of the text (p. 11), the opening verbs of v. 4 are frequently changed to read the feminine third person singular and therefore imply that it is Naaman's wife who has come and told her husband. This emendation is an attempt to explain the chain of transmission from the girl's message in v. 3 to the king of Aram in v. 5. But the change to the feminine, in keeping with the Grr, is no significant improvement over the MT since it only opens up the question of how the message moves from Naaman to the king of Aram. G^L provides a consistent account of the transmission, but it appears as an explanatory expansion rather than a witness to an original consistent text. In the face of the Grr evidence which is also inconsistent, we read with MT as the best but inadequate witness.

is wrong about the relationship between prophetic action and gifts --as the narrative shows in vv. 15-16. V. 5 presents us with two misunderstandings about the nature of the prophet on the part of the Arameans. Their responses to the message of the girl are inappropriate and they will have to be corrected by Elisha (cf. vv. 8 and 16).

In v. 6, Naaman takes the message of the king of Aram to the king of Israel saying (נִתְּנָה) that when the letter comes to him, then he has sent Naaman, his servant to him, so cure him of his leprosy. This second message presents a revision of the first message in v. 3 (and v. 4). Now it is the king of Israel, and not the prophet in Samaria, who is to provide the cure for Naaman's leprosy. The use of מִלְּפָנָיו מִיְּדוֹן provides continuity between this message and the statement of the girl in v. 3. As we have already indicated, the king of Aram's letter is a misinterpretation of the original message. Just how much of a misinterpretation is indicated by the contrast between the girl's wish that her lord were before the prophet--i.e. subservient to him--and the king of Syria's description of Naaman as יָדָיו.

In v. 7, the king of Israel reads the letter and then questions its intent. The request seems so absurd to him that he assumes the motivation must be political; he concludes that the king of Aram is seeking an occasion against him. The request which the king of Aram makes is so obviously impossible that the king of Israel tears his clothes in response to reading it. But the king of Israel's response is based on a misunderstanding of the king of Aram's intent. The issue of Naaman's presence before the

prophet has become lost in the face of monarchic misinterpretation. The king of Aram does not understand the nature of the Israelite prophet, and the king of Israel does not understand the intent of the king of Aram (or the Israelite prophet, as Elisha implies in v. 8).

V. 8 provides the resolution to these compounded misunderstandings with the introduction of Elisha. Elisha hears that the king of Israel has torn his clothes and sends a messenger to summon Naaman, so at least the Aramean will know that there is a prophet in Israel. Elisha's intervention provides the way out of the confusion which the kings have created. This comparison of the king of Israel with Elisha is reflected in the syntactic structures of vv. 7 and 8:

V. 7

ויהי כקרא

the king reads

מלך ישראל

the subjects of the verses described

וקרע בגדיו

the king rips his clothes

ויאמר

the king says...

האלהים אני

the king questions
the letter

V. 8

ויהי כשעד

Elisha hears

אלישע איש האלהים

כיקרע מלך ישראל את בגדיו

Elisha hears that the king
has ripped his clothes

וישלח אל-מלך ישראל

Elisha sends a message to
the king saying...

למה קרעת בגדיך

Elisha questions the king's
actions

כִּי זֶה שְׁלָה אֵלַי

that this is sent
to me

יָבֹא-נָא אֵלַי

let him come to me

יָדַע כִּי יֵשׁ נָבִיא בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל דַּעַת-נָא... כִּי חוֹמָאנָה הוּא לִי

so know that he seeks
occasion against me

know that there is a
prophet in Israel

Elisha's rebuke of the king of Israel, in questioning the rending of clothes, reflects the larger antipathy between the kings of Israel and Elisha (cf. II Kg. 3:13), and between kings and prophets in general. The king of Israel's remorse at the king of Aram's request is seen as a denial of the prophetic power. As such Elisha acts immediately to re-affirm that there is a prophet in Israel and that the cure of Naaman's leprosy is not impossible.

The message which Naaman brings to the king of Israel and the king of Israel's response to the letter form the centre of this section of the narrative. The verb נָלַשׁ plays a central role in the development of this section. In v. 5, the king of Aram says he will send (נִלְשָׁה) a letter to the king of Israel. In v. 6, the letter says that when this letter comes to you, then I have sent (נִלְשָׁה) to you Naaman, my servant. In v. 7, the king of Israel questions why this is sent (נָלַשׁ) to him. The ambiguity of נָלַשׁ encompasses both Naaman and the letter, so that the king of Israel questions both the intent of the letter and the very presence of Naaman. Finally, in v. 8, Elisha sends (נִלְשָׁה) to the king of Israel questioning his actions in response to the king of Israel. One message produces a response and the other message addresses that response. But the content of the

messages is radically different. The king of Aram asks that someone cure a man of his leprosy. Elisha asks that the man come to him in order to know that there is a prophet in Israel, as if this were the key to the cure of Naaman's leprosy. In the end, it is the message of Elisha which leads to the cure of Naaman and the episode of the kings turns out only to be a diversion. The futility of Naaman's dealings with the kings is reflected in the conclusion of this section, when Naaman repeats the action (אָלַךְ) which began the section. Naaman finally comes, not to his lord but to Elisha.

Naaman's response to the message of the prophet and his servants' affirmation of the prophetic word (vv. 11-13) form an additional supplementary unit within the narrative sequence. In conjunction with vv. 10 and 14 they form a pattern centering on the words יָנַח and נָחָה.

In v. 10, Elisha sends a messenger to Naaman telling him to wash (יָנַח) in the Jordan seven times and his skin would return to him and he would become clean. The action of sending a messenger distances the prophet from the people with whom he is dealing. Elisha's message presents a pointed contrast to the content of the messages in v. 3 and v. 6. The procedure which Elisha describes will not cure (יָנַח) Naaman of his leprosy, it will make him clean (נָחָה).

In vv. 11 and 12, the narrative presents Naaman's response to Elisha's actions and his message. The two verses are enclosed with a description of Naaman's emotional reaction to the message. He becomes angry and he goes away angry. Naaman's response to Elisha's message parallels the king of Israel's response to the

message of the king of Aram. They both express strong emotion. But the king of Israel expresses remorse at the impossible request of the king of Aram and the obvious (for him) political motivation for the letter. In Naaman's case, he expresses anger at the triviality of the request, dismissing the conditions of the cure as worthless. In their responses to the messages, Naaman and the king of Israel are alike for they both respond in a manner which dismisses the surface content of the messages as absurd.

Naaman questions both the type of cure suggested and the manner in which the cure is to be affected. Naaman's expectation is that the prophet would come forth and call in the name of YHWH and wave his hand over the spot and cure the leprosy. Instead the prophet has sent a messenger, telling him to wash in a river. This expectation is another in a series of expectations which are defeated. The king of Aram expects the prophet to be accessible through his king; Naaman expects the cure to require a gift to the prophet; the king of Israel expects an ulterior motive for the king of Aram's letter; and Naaman expects the prophet to physically effect the cure of his leprosy. All these expectations arise from misunderstanding the nature of the prophet and all are defeated.

Naaman expects action; all he gets is words. And the action required is so simply and humble as to be questionable. So Naaman asks whether the rivers of Damascus are not better than any of the waters of Israel. Could he not wash in them and be cured? The answer, of course, is "no" to both questions, for the cure is not a product of the waters themselves but the power of YHWH through

his prophet Elisha.¹⁷

Naaman's response to the words of Elisha is a questioning of both Elisha's action in sending a message and the content of the message. If Elisha's sending of the messenger is indicated by A, and the content of the message is B, then Naaman's response is to deny both A and B (i.e., -A + -B).

V. 13 introduces the servants of Naaman, who seek to convince their master that he should comply with the words of the prophet. The servants' statement is presented in terms of a comparison (cf. the use of $\text{ן} \text{ן}$ in I Sam. 14:30; 21:6; 23:3, I Kg. 8:27). The servants argue that if the prophet had asked Naaman to do something difficult, would he not have done it? So how much more willing should he be simply to wash and be clean. The servants' function here to re-affirm the message which Elisha originally sent to Naaman. Along with the servant girl in vv. 2 and 3, the servants in the first half of the narrative serve to direct Naaman towards Elisha and his message.

In terms of the symbols which we assigned to the original action and message of Elisha, the servants of Naaman serve to re-iterate the action and the message: A' + B'.

The conclusion of this encounter between Naaman and Elisha occurs in v. 14. In response to his servant's plea, Naaman goes down and dips in the Jordan seven times according to the word of the man of God and he becomes clean. The message of Elisha

¹⁷Lk. 4:27 probably understands as much when Jesus cites this story in conjunction with the acceptance of the prophet as a requisite for prophetic action.

is fulfilled in the action of Naaman, a vindication of the power of the prophetic word and an answer to the questions which Naaman posed in v. 12. This submission of Naaman to the word of the prophet represents the first step in Naaman's "standing before the prophet," which the girl described in v. 3. The actual physical presence of Naaman before the prophet occurs in v. 15. Naaman's acceptance of prophetic authority is a precondition of his meeting the prophet. The change is appropriately mirrored in the difference between v. 10 and v. 15. In v. 10, Naaman stands at the gate of the house of Elisha and Elisha sends a messenger to him. In v. 15, Naaman comes and stands before the prophet, face-to-face. Naaman's unmediated association with the prophet cannot proceed until he accepts the word of the prophet.

V. 14 presents us with the fulfillment of A and B. The narrative section from v. 10 through v. 14 involves the alternation between two messages and two responses.

Elisha sends a messenger telling Naaman to wash in the Jordan and be clean	<u>A</u> + <u>B</u>
--	---------------------

Naaman questions the sending of the messenger and the content of the message	<u>-A</u> + <u>-B</u>
--	-----------------------

Naaman's servants affirm the prophetic word and repeat the command	<u>A'</u> + <u>B'</u>
--	-----------------------

Naaman does according to the word of the man of God and becomes clean	<u>A+</u> + <u>B+</u>
---	-----------------------

The two supplementary sections (vv. 4-8 and vv. 11-13) give expression to certain aspects of Elisha which are not conveyed

in his relationships with Naaman and Gehazi. The episode of the kings shows Elisha's relation to the king of Israel, and presents the kings in a satirical manner which highlights Elisha's eventual intervention in v. 8. Naaman's angry response to Elisha's message indicates the expected manner in which leprosy would be cured. The contrast between Naaman's expectations and the actual manner in which he is cured only serves to heighten the extraordinary nature of Elisha's power. The prophet is no mere shaman, who must perform a ritual to affect a cure, but the man of God who has the power of YHWH with him. Whilst these sections are supplementary in terms of the narrative sequence, they contribute to the characterization of Elisha and therefore provide an essential element for our interpretation of Elisha.

The preceding analysis of the narrative structure provides a way into the text. It shows not only the relations between the characters of the narrative but also the dominant motifs and their correlation. In order to summarize, and to discuss the meaning of the text which arises from the structure, it will be necessary to reconsider the structure as we have presented it.

The overall structure of the narrative involves the correlation between the actions of subordination/insubordination and affliction/cleansing. Naaman's initial affliction is cleansed through his submission to the word of the prophet. Gehazi's initially clean state is changed to affliction through his disregard for the prophetic word. The states of afflicted and cleansed are the results of the actions of submission and non-submission. It

would appear then that the point of the narrative is to show that those who acknowledge the word of the prophet will be cleansed and those who deny the word of the prophet will be afflicted. But two things mitigate against such a conclusion. Naaman's initial state of affliction is unmotivated by any sense of disobedience to the prophet. Thus his initial affliction does not correspond to the pattern. In addition, Elisha's assent to Naaman's request allows the simultaneous existence of NS + N-S, which defeats the correlation between cleansing and submission. Whilst the states of afflicted and cleansed are indeed the result of submission and non-submission, the meaning in the narrative lies beyond this correlation.

The unexplained affliction provides the clue to the purpose of the narrative. Just as there is no motivation for Naaman's affliction, so there is no motivation for Elisha to offer him a way to be cleansed. Naaman's affliction and his cleansing are gratuitous and serve only to focus our attention upon the figure of Elisha, and his action in offering the miraculous way to be clean. Both the king of Israel's suggestion that the curing of leprosy is like giving life and making death, and Naaman's own expectations about the manner of his cure, focus our attention upon the actual manner in which Naaman becomes clean. It is not Naaman's affliction and his cure which is of central importance, although the sequence begins and ends with him, but Elisha's directive action in making Naaman clean. Leprosy provides the surface purpose under which Elisha can perform his function as prophet.

Similarly, Elisha's action (in assenting to Naaman's request

that he serve two masters) removes the emphasis on submission and acknowledgement of the prophet which the narrative sequence achieves. The emphasis is drawn from the correlation of submission and cure to the prophet's action once again. The resumption of the correlation in the case of Gehazi only serves to add emphasis to its defeat in the case of Naaman.

Elisha himself is not subordinate to the reader's expectations and in the larger sense, he is not subject to the expectations of Naaman and Gehazi. Naaman expects Elisha to wave his hands in the air and call on the name of his God to cure leprosy, and all he says is wash seven times in the Jordan. Naaman expects him to accept the offer of the gift, but Elisha calls on the name of his God and refuses. Gehazi does not expect him to know of his deception, and his acquisition of the gift, yet Elisha has been with him all along. In the larger narrative context, the reader might reasonably expect Elisha to refuse to cure an Aramean army commander who was the intimate of kings, yet he offers him a simple means to become clean. The reader might expect him to refuse Naaman's request that he be allowed to serve two masters and two gods, yet he assents. The figure of Elisha is extraordinary indeed and the contrast between the narrative sequences and their denouements indicate this fully.

What is the narrative about? It is about Elisha and the other characters in the narrative only serve to show that it is about Elisha. They come to him and they go forth from him, they obey him and they disobey him, he afflicts them and he cures them but he himself remains unmoved; a figure whose actions affect those

APPENDIX I

First sequence and
denouement

Overall sequence

Second sequence
and denouement

$$\begin{aligned} & \underline{NS} + \underline{NA} \\ & + \\ & (\underline{N-S} \Rightarrow \underline{N-A})_{\text{cond M}} \end{aligned}$$

NTr

$$(\underline{N-S} \Rightarrow \underline{NC})_{\text{condM}}$$

NC

$$\underline{N-S} + \underline{NS}$$

=

NA

+

=

$$(\underline{N-S} \Rightarrow \underline{NC})_{\text{stat E}}$$

+

=

NC

NO

+

$$(\underline{ES} \Rightarrow \underline{E-T})_{\text{statE}}$$

+

NTr

+

$$(\underline{G-S} \Rightarrow \underline{GT})_{\text{statG}}$$

+

N-O

+

$$(\underline{G-S} \Rightarrow \underline{G[NA]})_{\text{statE}}$$

+

GA

=

$$\underline{G(NA)} + \underline{N-A}$$

Appendix I (Cont'd)

The Symbols:

N = Naaman

G = Gehazi

E = Elisha

M = Messenger

S = subordinate

A = afflicted

Tr = transitional

C = clean

O = obligated/offer

T = take

cond = conditional statement

stat = statement

(...) = expression

 \Rightarrow = implication/causation

+ = temporal succession

- = opposition/negation

ABBREVIATIONS

BZAW	Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft. Beihefte
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JNES	Journal of Near Eastern Studies
SVT	Supplements to Vetus Testament
VT	Vetus Testamentum
ZAW	Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft

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