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Equivalent Master Thesis

## Esther's Call

Reading Esther 4:1-16 in Light of Call Narrative Type-Scene

Kyoungsik Kim

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This work was carried out under the supervision of Dr. Joshua Berman  
Zalman Shamir Department of the Bible, Bar-Ilan University

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## Abstract

This thesis aims to understand Esther 4 as a call narrative type-scene and to observe its formal and thematic characteristics.

Chapter one presents the methodological remarks for the study. With regard to the call narrative pattern, the researches of N. Habel and W. Richter are very significant. However, their formal criteria for the call narrative pattern are unduly rigid, and it seems that they miss essential characteristics of the call narrative pattern. In contrast to their rigid methodological criteria, I utilize a flexible methodology for the recurrent literary pattern based on the assumption that the recurrent literary patterns are the results of a “literary convention.” This methodological assumption is dependent on R. Alter’s “type-scene.” This methodology assumes that both typicality and individuality are very significant characteristics in a literary pattern. While the typical pattern of a certain text informs its general literary characteristic, the individuality of the text offers the particular intent of the author. The methodological criteria of the flexible approach to the literary pattern could be presented as follows:

- 1) The recurrent pattern is understood as a literary convention.
- 2) The literary convention is adapted by the author for the specific mood or need of the text.
- 3) The author’s intent is expressed through the individuality of the text.
- 4) The setting is found in the specific circumstances of the author or the text.

Based on these flexible methodological criteria, I attempted to find the typicality and individuality of the call narrative type-scene. For this task, I collected and analyzed various literary elements of the call narratives presented by numerous scholars. Next, I found typical elements of the call narrative type-scene included in all the call narratives: *Personal Address*, *Commission*, *Persuasion* and *Initial Recognition*. Based on these typical elements of the call narrative, the call narrative type-scene expresses that “*the certain commission is personally imposed to the appointee through the*

*authoritative appointer's persuasion and the appointee's status is radically changed.*" Since the "change" is the central element of the call narrative, the psychological challenge of the appointee for the change of self-identity is stressed through the call narrative. In this regard, the typicality of the call narrative type-scene generally highlights the great challenge and struggle of the appointee in taking on the imposed mission.

The individual elements of a call narrative type-scene reflect the certain characteristic of each call narrative. According to the peculiar individualities such as the characteristic of the appointer, appointee and the imposed mission, the call narrative type-scene could be classified into three different type-scenes: *the call of the ambassador, the call of the savior and the call of the prophet*. And the additional individual elements also reflect each peculiar characteristic of the call narrative. It is assumed that the main intent of the author is implied in the individuality of the narrative pattern.

Chapter two highlights that the flexible approach to the recurrent literary pattern opens the possibility to read Esther 4 as a call narrative type-scene. In Esther 4, we can find the fundamental elements of the call narrative type-scene: the authoritative appointer (Mordecai), the appointee (Esther) and the radical change of the appointer (4:16) through the commission (v.14). Thus it is considered that Esther 4 stresses the great challenge to Esther in her acceptance of the imposed mission.

However, the crucial characteristics of Esther's call narrative are revealed by its specific literary elements: *National Distress, Appointee's Suitability for Mission (Initial Fitness), Ordinary Life before the Call (Unexpected Call), Personal Address, Commission and Revealing Unsuitability (Apprehension), The Mission against Appointee's Will, Initial Recognition and Evidence (Sign)*.

Particularly, it seems that Esther 4 includes elements of both the heroic and prophetic call narrative type-scene. I assume that the character of Esther is portrayed based on the preceding biblical saviors and prophets called to a specific mission. The Persian periods reflect a new era which lacks prophets or heroic military leaders. By adapting the call narrative type-scene to Esther, therefore, the author intended that the commissioned leader for the salvation of diaspora Jews still existed, when the diaspora Jews could no longer have any hope for divine involvement or military victory.

Indeed, Esther is the savior of diaspora Jews, but she constantly reveals the confusion of self-identity. Before the call, she had lived as the foreign king's wife in a harem, living apart from other Jews. In other words, she had been separated physically and psychologically from the Jewish identity. When Mordecai commanded Esther to save the Jews, she reveals her apprehension against violating Persian law. Through the call, however, Esther tries to participate in the community of diaspora Jews. But it seems that Esther was not fully transformed into a Jew. Although she was the savior of Jews, she remained as the foreign king's wife. Esther's endless confusion of self-identity may reflect the existential struggle of diaspora Jews between assertive Jewish identity and royalty to a foreign political authority.

However, it also has to be noted that Esther's royal status was the crucial condition for her election as the savior. She actually utilized her benefit as the king's wife in order to save the Jews. It is true that Esther's appellation as the king's wife reflects her constant confusion of her self-identity, but it was also the crucial "weapon" for the victory of Jews.

In the exilic and post-exilic periods, the military victory of the Jews could not be expected in neither the territories of Israel nor the foreign land. Therefore the role of elevated Jews in the foreign court was crucial for the survival of Jews. It is no doubt that their political influence was crucial weapon for the survival and victory of the Jews. However, Esther was totally separated from her people. She did not actively want to be their savior. Rather she began to be transformed by the request of Mordecai. Esther seems to symbolize the high ranked Jewish leader in the foreign court without a definite self-identity. The awakening of hidden Jewish officials of the foreign court was necessary for the diaspora Jews. This could only be possible through their own concrete decision to be "real Jews." Thus, through Esther's call narrative type-scene, the author may be revealing his hope that the hidden Jewish officials of the foreign court would be "coming-out" and dedicate their lives to the safety of the Jews.

Another crucial individuality of Esther's call is the peculiar characteristic of the appointer, Mordecai. Mordecai was not divine being (G-d or messenger of G-d) nor a prophet (Samuel, Deborah). Thus he could not show miraculous signs or make the explicit prophetic predictions. Mordecai could

only offer Esther an obscure prediction and his own argument in order to persuade Esther. Thus it was very difficult for Mordecai to convince Esther to accept the imposed mission with a certain conviction. As I have observed in 4:16, Esther's unconvincing response (אבדתי אבדתי) implies that Mordecai failed to convince Esther sufficiently to believe in the success of the mission.

It is assumed that the crucial peculiarities of Esther's call narrative are "uncertainty" and "confusion." These peculiarities are more evidently emphasized by the absence of G-d in the scroll of Esther. In other call narratives, the appointees came to have strong convictions through their belief in G-d's involvement, even though the appointers were sometimes non-divine beings. This kind of conviction is totally absent in Esther's call narrative. Rather, Esther had to accept the imposed mission based on her own decision and her strong sympathy towards Mordecai and the Jews. As I have mentioned, Esther constantly had confusion in her ethnic identity. In order to save the Jews, however, she had to stand on the side of Jews, separating from her safety. Thus it seems that Esther's challenge and struggle are greater than any other appointees. Without any firm conviction in the ethnic identity and the success of her imposed mission, she decided to sacrifice herself for her people.

In this respect, the peculiar characteristics of Esther's call seem to reflect the actual struggles of diaspora Jews. The human appointer (Mordecai) who lacks a clear divine mandate and the appointee with uncertain ethnic identity (Esther) elaborately present the vulnerable destiny of diaspora Jews without a definite expectation for a visible divine involvement in their existential life. At the same time, the author of Esther explicitly seems to stress that the salvation still comes to the Jews through the responsible and sacrificial acts of human leaders. However, we cannot simply conclude that G-d's existence is totally absent and excluded here. In Esther's call narrative, the hope for the divine help might be implied by Mordecai's rhetorical question (4:14 מי ידע). And the author seems to implicitly refer to the providence of G-d through the coincidental events of the scroll. However, it seems still true that the hiddenness stresses the role of human responsibility in shaping history. And it also offers the hope that the salvation of Jews is still available, even when G-d's existence is still in question.



## Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . Edited by David Noel Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BBR	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BibInt	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation Series
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar, Altes Testament
BR	<i>Biblical Research</i>
BSac	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
BRev	<i>Bible Review</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
HBT	<i>Horizons in Biblical Theology</i>
HS	<i>Hebrew Studies</i>
Int	<i>Interpretation</i>
MQ	<i>Mankind Quarterly</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JHebS	<i>Journal of Hebrew Scriptures</i>
JR	<i>The Journal of Religion</i>
JBQ	<i>Jewish Bible Quarterly</i>
JHSB	<i>Journal of Health and Social Behavior</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
Proof	<i>Prooftexts: A Journal of Jewish Literary History</i>
Shnaton	<i>Shnaton: An Annual for Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies</i>
SocR	<i>The Sociological Quarterly</i>

<i>TDOT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> . Edited by G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren. Translated by John T. Willis et al. 8 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974–2006
<i>TLOT</i>	<i>Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Edited by Ernst Jenni, with assistance from Claus Westermann. Translated by Mark E. Biddle. 3 vols. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
<i>VTSup</i>	Supplements to <i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
<i>WBC</i>	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

## Introduction

Jon D. Levenson's commentary on Esther begins with the following sentence: "The book of Esther is many things, so many, in fact, that it would be a capital mistake to view it from only one angle."<sup>1</sup> His proclamation seems to reflect the complexity of Esther very well. Indeed, the scroll of Esther has been investigated voluminously from various perspectives: feminism,<sup>2</sup> politics,<sup>3</sup> religion,<sup>4</sup> wisdom literature,<sup>5</sup> along with others.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, it has also been observed that the scroll of Esther displays numerous links with other biblical books: the Joseph narrative in Genesis, the Exodus narrative, the battle narrative of Saul and Haman in 1Sam 15 and Solomon's succession narrative in 1Kings, the post-exilic biblical books and so on.<sup>7</sup>

The various biblical allusions in Esther reflect its implicit link with the preceding biblical traditions. A. Berlin also notes that "the author of Esther and his audience were familiar with parts of the Bible."<sup>8</sup> The exilic and post-exilic periods were the time setting of the collection of Scripture. Thus the traditional and authoritative writings like Torah and the Prophets were accepted among the Jewish

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<sup>1</sup> Jon Douglas Levenson, *Esther: A Commentary* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 1.

<sup>2</sup> For example, Rikvah Lubitch, "A Feminist's Look at Esther," *Judaism* 42 (1993): 438–46; Sidnie Ann White, "Esther: A Feminine Model for Jewish Diaspora," in *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel*, ed. Peggy L. Day (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1989), 161–77.

<sup>3</sup> Elsie R. Stern, "Esther and the Politics of Diaspora," *JBQ* 100, no. 1 (2010): 25–53.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Pröbstle, "Is There a God Behind This Text? A Closer Look at Esther 4:14 and 16," in *Creation, Life and Hope* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 2000), 147–68; Bob Becking and Anne-Mareike Wetter, eds., "Speaking from the gaps: the eloquent silence of God in Esther," in *Reflections on the silence of God: a discussion with Marjo Korpel and Johannes de Moor*, Oudtestamentische studiën 62 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2013), 153–67; Kristin De Troyer, "Is God Absent or Present in the Book of Esther?: An Old Problem Revisited," in *The Presence and Absence of God: Claremont Studies in the Philosophy of Religion, Conference 2008*, ed. Ingolf U. Dalferth (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 35–40; Jonathan Magonet, "The God Who Hides: Some Jewish Responses to the Book of Esther," *European Judaism* 47, no. 1 (2014): 109–16.

<sup>5</sup> S. Talmon, "'Wisdom' in the Book of Esther," *VT* 13, no. 4 (1963): 419–55.

<sup>6</sup> Greenspoon and Sidnie offer the very helpful bibliography of Esther organized according to the topics of research. Leonard J. Greenspoon and Sidnie White Crawford, *The Book of Esther in Modern Research*, JSOTSup (London: T & T Clark International, 2003).

<sup>7</sup> For the summaries of the biblical link in Esther, see the following literatures. Adele Berlin, *Esther*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2001), xxxvi–xli; Amos Frisch, "Between the Scroll of Esther and the Book of Kings [Hebrew]," *Mehoqrei Hag* 3 (1992): 25–35; Jonathan Grossman, *Esther the Outer Narrative and the Hidden Reading* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2011).

<sup>8</sup> Berlin, *Esther*, xxxvi.

communities during these periods. Scripture would have the crucial role of preserving the Jewish identity and tradition. Berlin correctly emphasizes that “it [link with the Bible] ties the fate of the Diaspora community to the story of biblical Israel.”<sup>9</sup> In this light, it is assumed that the Diaspora Jews tried to portray their lives based on the continuous biblical traditions.

The scroll of Esther, however, also reveals explicit particularities distinct from other biblical books. It offers the tale of Diaspora Jews who did not return to the land of Israel. Reference to G-d or HIS existence is totally omitted in the Masoretic version.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, it tells the story of the marriage of a Jewish woman and Persian king, and the violent revenge of Jews against the gentile enemies.<sup>11</sup> It seems that these characteristics make recognizing Esther’s theological link with the former biblical traditions difficult. These features would be derived from the historical peculiarity of the author of Esther.

Therefore, we ought to consider the continuity and discontinuity of the biblical traditions in the scroll of Esther. Certain biblical traditions were adopted to the scroll, but it was also “transformed” for the particular narrative purpose of the author. Through recognizing the transformation of biblical motifs in Esther, an enhanced understanding of the scroll would be available.

The main plot of the scroll of Esther is the salvation of the Diaspora Jews from the evil scheme of Haman. In the Bible, there are numerous salvation narratives. For example, the Exodus narrative tells the salvation of the Israelites through divine intervention. For this thematic similarity between Exodus and Esther, several scholars have already suggested that Esther and Purim are modeled after Exodus and Passover.<sup>12</sup> These scholars also observed the transformation of Exodus tradition transmitted to

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> In LXX and alpha text of Esther, the explicit reference to G-d and piety of Jews are found. In this paper, however, the textual matter is not my concern. I will only deal with the Masoretic version of Esther. For the textual issues of Esther, see the following literatures. Michael V. Fox, *The Redaction of the Books of Esther: On Reading Composite Texts* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1991); David J. A. Clines, *The Esther Scroll: The Story of the Story*, JSOTSup 30 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984); Linda Marie Day, *Three Faces of a Queen: Characterization in the Books of Esther*, JSOTSup 186 (Sheffield: Sheffield Acad. Press, 1995).

<sup>11</sup> Because of the description of the violent act of Jews against the gentiles, the scroll of Esther has not been accepted well by the Christians. For example, Martin Luther commented that “I am so hostile to this book [2 Maccabees] and Esther that I could wish that they did not exist at all, for they Judaize too greatly and have much pagan impropriety.” Cited from Frederic William Bush, “The Book of Esther: Opus Non Gratum in the Christian Canon,” *BBR* 8 (1998): 39.

<sup>12</sup> J. A. Loader, “Esther as a Novel with Different Levels of Meaning,” *ZAW* 90 (1978): 417–21; W. Lee

Diaspora Jews in the scroll of Esther. In this thesis, I will also keep my focus on the transmission and transformation of the preceding salvation motif in the scroll of Esther. However, I will not limit the range of research only to Exodus; rather I will try to expand the range of research to include other salvation narratives like the ones in Judges and 1 Samuel. Moreover, among the various salvation motifs, I will mainly focus on the call narrative type-scene<sup>13</sup> which presents the commission of the savior (appointee). Although the call narrative type-scene does not occur in every salvation narrative, I think that the call narrative type-scene is the “core element” of the salvation narratives which include it. It carries crucial themes like the characteristic of the appointer and the appointee, and the purpose of the mission. Thus the call narrative type-scene defines the general characteristic of the salvation narrative.

The call narrative type-scene is also frequently found in the prophetic literature. The call narrative type-scene of the prophetic literature also offers the certain characteristic of commissioned prophets. Although the prophetic tradition is not explicitly presented in Esther, the partial implication for the prophetic tradition might be found through the call narrative type-scene.

In this thesis, I propose that Esther 4 can be read in light of the biblical call narrative type-scene. I will argue that the author of Esther used the call narrative type-scene in order to characterize Esther as the biblical savior or prophetess. In this way the author may try to stress that the history of salvation, which their ancestors had experienced, had still not ceased even outside of the land of Israel. Adopting and transforming the biblical call narrative type-scene, the author of Esther attempted to portray a particular picture of salvation for the Diaspora Jews. The author of Esther had hoped to show how the Diaspora Jews who remained in Persia could experience the same biblical salvation. Although they did not return to Jerusalem and could not participate in the rebuilding of the Temple, the author seems to assert that the Diaspora Jews are also an important part of the continuous salvation history. In this perspective, Esther, who is called to the mission of salvation, can also be considered as the biblical savior for endangered Jews like Moses and Gideon.

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Humphreys, “A Life-Style for Diaspora: A Study of the Tales of Esther and Daniel,” *JBL* 92, no. 2 (1973): 216; Aaron J. Koller, *Esther in Ancient Jewish Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 90–106.

<sup>13</sup> In this paper, I will use the terminology of “type-scene” for the repetitive narrative pattern following R. Alter’s literary convention. The terminology and its meaning will be discussed in the following section of methodology.

For this study, presentation of proper methodological discussions is due. The basic methodology for this study is based on the narrative type-scene. To the best of my knowledge, there has not been an attempt to define Esther 4 as the call narrative type-scene. Several scholars did attempt to analyze the formal characteristic of the call narrative in light of “rigid” form criticism, which emphasizes rigid and fixed pattern.<sup>14</sup> As Esther 4 lacks many literary components of the “typical call narrative genre”, it has not drawn scholastic attention to recognize the genre of Esther 4 as the call narrative type-scene. Thus, I will bring up the problems of the rigid form criticism, and I will approach the call narrative type-scene in a more flexible perspective. This flexible approach and methodology will offer enhanced understanding of Esther 4.

From this methodological observation, it will be possible to find the essential characteristic of salvation motif in Esther. The adaptation of biblical call narrative type-scene to Esther reflects that the author was standing on the extension of the biblical tradition. However, the transformation of the call narrative type-scene reflects the author’s particular understanding on the salvation in his own time. Comparing the other biblical call narrative elements, I will present how the author of Esther transformed the traditional salvation motifs in his writings. And as I have mentioned, the call narrative type-scene is also found in several prophetic literatures. Thus the possible thematic link between Esther and the prophetic literature will also be discussed.

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<sup>14</sup> Norman Habel, “The Form and Significance of the Call Narratives,” *ZAW* 77, no. 3 (1965): 297–323; Wolfgang Richter, *Die Sogenannten Vorprophetischen Berufungsberichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1970).

## Chapter One. Methodological Remarks: Type-Scene and Call Narrative

### 1.1. Genre or Type-Scene?

In the Bible, we can find a great deal of repetitions. The repetitions of specific patterns within biblical literature had been considered as the evidence for the duplication of same stories derived from different sources by the Classical Documentary Hypothesis (CDH).<sup>15</sup> For example, we can find three “Wife-Sister Narratives” in Genesis (A. Gen. 12:10-20; B. 20:1-18; C. 26:6-11). These three narratives commonly offer the repeated pattern which the patriarchs (Abraham and Isaac) claim that their wives (Sarah and Rebekah) are their sisters. CDH scholars considered that A and C belong to the J source and B belongs to the E source.<sup>16</sup> This kind of source criticism, however, failed to show the individual characteristic of each repeated pattern. Rather, the repetition was acknowledged as the “literary variants” derived from “different sources.” Actually Wellhausen tended to “generalize” the specific features of individual narratives based on historicist perspective. He concentrated on the general literary tendency and style of broader source which includes the individual narratives.<sup>17</sup> And CDH scholars focused on the mutual relationships between the different sources, and on the process of composition of the sources.

On the other hand, it was H. Gunkel who put much weight on the “formal variants” of the

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<sup>15</sup> E.g. Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* (New York: Meridian Books, 1957), 295. : “In the historical books the tradition is developed by means of supplement and revision; double narratives occur here and there, but not great parallel pieces of connected matter side by side. In the Hexateuch additions and supplements have certainly taken place on the most extensive scale, but the significant feature is here that continuous narratives which can and must be understood each by itself are woven together in a double or threefold cord.”

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 317 n.1; John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1930), 242–3, 251, 315, 363; E. A Speiser, *Genesis*, vol. 1, AB (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1964), 91; Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, trans. John H Marks (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), 226, 270; Martin Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions*, trans. Bernhard W. Anderson (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972), 102–9; Claus Westermann, *Genesis 12-36: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House, 1985), 161–2.

<sup>17</sup> See Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel*, 171. Wellhausen’s source criticism is based on the historicist perspective. He believes that each source was influenced by “each successive age”, namely “one way in the ninth and eighth centuries, another way in the seventh and sixth, and yet another in the fifth and fourth.” Thus the individual characteristics of narratives are ignored by the general thematic tendency of “each successive age” which produced the broader source.

repeated narratives “transmitted almost totally independently of one another.”<sup>18</sup> The biblical methodologies which observe certain peculiarities of the recurrent pattern of biblical literatures are indebted to the pioneering work of Gunkel. He brought the methodological shift, “from the emphasis of the content or theme to the literary genre.”<sup>19</sup> In his commentary on Genesis, Gunkel presents the methodological model focused on the literary genre. Gunkel contends that the distinct literary genre of narrative such as the *Sage* (legend) could be defined by its own narrative characteristics and subjects.<sup>20</sup> The form criticism mainly focuses on the literary structure, linguistic types, genre, setting, and intent.<sup>21</sup> For example, the Annunciation Narrative offers particular literary characteristics.<sup>22</sup> It frequently begins with the notion of barrenness (cf. Gen. 11:30 ותהי שרי עקרה אין לה ולד). After the notion of the barrenness, the annunciation is delivered to the barren woman by the divine messenger or the human visitor (cf. 18:14 והיפלא מיהוה דבר למועד אשוב אליך כעת חיה ולשרה בן). And the fulfillment of the promise of childbirth is depicted (cf. 21:2 ותהר ותלד שרה לאברהם בן לזקניו למועד אשר-דבר אתו אלהים). The Annunciation Narratives of the Bible are comprised of the particular components and linguistic types. And it has its own literary intent and function within the broader text.

However, Gunkel’s criticism is not just limited to the observation of certain form of the text. He eventually tried to present the “history of the literature.”<sup>23</sup> His emphasis on the “history of literature” seems to put significant weight on the various “text types” produced through the history of transmission. Thus his criticism is basically diachronic.

Furthermore, Gunkel particularly emphasizes the variable characteristic of the *Sage* (legend).<sup>24</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis*, trans. Mark E. Biddle (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1997), lvi–lvii.

<sup>19</sup> Jay A. Wilcoxon, “Narrative,” in *Old Testament Form Criticism*, ed. John H. Hayes (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1974), 59.

<sup>20</sup> Gunkel distinguishes the legends of Genesis as follows: mythical legends (Gen 1-11) and patriarchal legends (Gen 12-50). And the patriarchal legends have the further divisions: historical, ethnographic and etiological legends. See Gunkel, *Genesis*, vii–xxiii; Wilcoxon, “Narrative,” 60–61.

<sup>21</sup> For the summary of Gunkel’s methodology, see Wilcoxon, “Narrative,” 58–68.; Actually these terms are variously expressed in this discipline.

<sup>22</sup> Gen. 18:9-15; 25:19-25; 30:1ff; Judg. 13; 1Sam. 1; 2Kgs. 4:8-17

<sup>23</sup> See Ehard Blum, “Formgeschichte - A Misleading Category? Some Critical Remarks,” in *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Marvin A. Sweeney and Ehud Ben Zvi (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 2003), 33–34. Blum states that “For him [Gunkel] the issue was not about ‘forms’ and their history, but about the program of a ‘history of literature,’ which ‘arranges the material according to genres.’”

<sup>24</sup> The terminology of “Legend” of Gunkel is refuted by several scholars, because this terminology much simplified the characteristic of the biblical genres and it was used so confusedly. Cf. Ronald M. Hals, “Legend: A



While CDH had focused on the literary variants, Gunkel observed the oral variants. Because he considered that biblical legends were originated from oral traditions, he assumed that the legends existed in variants. According to him, the variants of the legend verify that the individual legend was taken and transmitted by different generations and societies.<sup>25</sup> Thus the process of social and religious changes are found by comparing the variants of the repeated stories. For example, two different etiologies of Beersheba confirm the variants created by different groups that transmitted different etiologies (Gen. 21:31; 26:32-33).<sup>26</sup> And the original story of “Nephilim” was garbled and changed into the current short story (6:1ff), in accordance with the development of monolithic religion of Israel.<sup>27</sup> In this way, Gunkel’s criticism deals with both genre and history of the text.<sup>28</sup>

In this respect, according to Gunkel, “Wife-Sister Narratives” are not considered as the duplications of sources. As opposed to earlier CDH scholars, Gunkel contends that each Wife-Sister narrative presents a peculiar text type derived from different historical levels of transmission. Gunkel observes the historical developments of literature among the recurrent narratives. According to his classification of genre, A (Gen. 12:10-20) is the old and profane folklore (saga) and B (20:1-18) is the legend presenting more religious characteristic. C (26:6-11) reflects the most enhanced ethical development but it lost the characteristic of the story (A – J<sup>b</sup>, B – E, C – J’).<sup>29</sup> Thus these three stories present different literary genres. In his criticism, the generic text type (genre) of the each narrative is explicitly emphasized.

As I have discussed, Gunkel utilizes the term *Gattung* (genre) for the reference to the specific text type. Since the term “genre” refers to certain generalized pattern of individual texts, the

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Case Study in OT Form-Critical Terminology,” *CBQ* 34, no. 2 (1972): 166–76.

<sup>25</sup> Gunkel, *Genesis*, lvi.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 297–8.

<sup>27</sup> See *Ibid.*, lix.

<sup>28</sup> Hyun Chul Paul Kim, “Form Criticism in Dialogue with Other Criticisms,” in *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Marvin A Sweeney and Ehud Ben Zvi (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 2003), 86.

<sup>29</sup> Gunkel, *Genesis*, 168, 218, 223–5, 293. Although Gunkel himself presented the new methodology, so-called form criticism, his terminology and the division of the sources were dependent on Wellhausen’s Documentary Hypothesis. But Gunkel assumed the literary characteristic of J and E as the “collections resulting from codifications of oral traditions”, not as the pure authors. See *Ibid.*, lxix–lxxix.

characteristic of genre is “typical” in nature.<sup>30</sup> From the above example, however, we are able to notice that Gunkel’s classification of the genre produced somewhat “rigid criteria.” For example, he distinguished the genre of each Wife-Sister narrative based on the “typical type” of each text. And, based on the “genre” of the text, *Sitz im Leben* of each text is discerned. Indeed, Gunkel’s main focus was on the identification of the individual *Sitz im Leben* behind the form which had produced and transmitted the particular narrative genre through the observation of typical narrative pattern.

However, the methodological problems of Gunkel’s rigid classification of genre have been raised by many scholars. First of all, it is highly questionable if Gunkel’s classification of the genre (e.g. legend) was also equally identified as such in the literature of ancient world.<sup>31</sup> R. Knierim criticizes that “Gunkel’s own theoretical conceptualization of a genre as a coherent entity of mood, form, and setting was *at best an ideal* (my italic).”<sup>32</sup> Moreover, Gunkel’s genre is not so practical in recognizing the literary peculiarities of the individual text. D. Peterson mentions that Gunkel’s genre label of *Sage* does not reveal the essential characteristic of the individual text.<sup>33</sup> Gunkel’s *Sage* includes the plentiful literatures, which present the various contents, themes and intentions. The stereotype genre label of *Sage* seems to reduce each text’s individuality too much. In this regard, Peterson contends that the respective texts have to be labeled according to the “intrinsic genre.”<sup>34</sup> His term “intrinsic genre” refers to both typical and individual characteristic of the text. These methodological assumptions demand that we rethink the essential nature of literature. It is a fact that Gunkel’s methodological focus on the form

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<sup>30</sup> In this respect “genre” should not be confused with “form”, which refers to the individual structure of the text. A. Campbell mentions that German *Form* can be understood better by English “structure.” Antony F. Campbell, “Form Criticism’s Future,” in *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Marvin A. Sweeney and Ehud Ben Zvi (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 2003), 25.

<sup>31</sup> See Susan Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word: Ancient Israelite Literature* (London: SPCK, 1997), 20–21. Niditch also has doubt about the faith that the modern readers may uncover the ancient Israelite literary genres. Following Culley’s notion, she tells that “the Israelite literary tradition preserved in the Hebrew Bible is characterized by what Culley has called “themes and variations.” For the problem of the definition of oral genre and its debates, see Aulikki Nahkola, *Double Narratives in the Old Testament: The Foundations of Method in Biblical Criticism*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 273 (Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2001), 117–32.

<sup>32</sup> Rolf P. Knierim, “Old Testament Form Criticism Reconsidered,” *Int* 27 (1973): 436.

<sup>33</sup> David L. Peterson, “A Thrice-Told Tale: Genre, Theme, and Motif,” *BR* 18 (1973): 33.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 43. Peterson opposes to Gunkel’s genre classification of Wife-Sister narratives. He argues that the thematic singularity of three narratives have to be considered. This he classifies three narratives as same genre, “patriarchal saga” based on the both of “intrinsic theme” and “type of the text”.

of the text contributed to recognizing the importance of a particular literary pattern for the proper understanding of literary characteristics. However, it also has to be assumed that the thematic individualities also present the essential intent of the text. Therefore, both typical form and thematic peculiarity are indispensable for the proper understanding of a certain text.

R. Alter approaches the recurrent patterns in terms of “literary convention.”<sup>35</sup> He attempts to reveal the different aspects of the recurrent pattern by presenting the research of R. Culley on the oral literatures of the Bible. Culley surveyed the oral storytelling in the West Indies and Africa. He mentions that the folkloric stories had been distorted and changed through oral transmission. He thinks that the same mechanism occurred in biblical literature.<sup>36</sup> Although “Culley himself did not realize it”, Alter came to have the conviction that variants of stories within a common pattern reflect the existence of “literary convention.”<sup>37</sup> Gunkel and several of his successors assume that the variants of repeated narratives arose *unintentionally* as a result of oral transmission.<sup>38</sup> Contrary to Gunkel’s assumption, however, Alter considers that, in light of literary convention, the repetition was *intentionally* produced by the author’s own literary need. Thus the literary repetition with variants is not just a coincidental literary phenomenon, rather it is a particular narrative artistry of the author.<sup>39</sup> Alter introduces the term for the recurrent pattern, “type-scene” borrowed from preceding Homer scholarship. He explains that “the type-scene has been plausibly connected with the special needs of oral composition” and “there are certain fixed situations which the poet is expected to include in his narrative and which he must perform according to a set order of motifs.”<sup>40</sup>

Alter’s concept of type-scene also displays a peculiar understanding of the literary type distinct from Gunkel’s genre. Gunkel’s concept of genre concentrates on the general and common patterns (forms) of biblical literatures. Gunkel and his successors labeled the genres based on their *own* criteria

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<sup>35</sup> Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 47–62.

<sup>36</sup> Robert C. Culley, *Studies in the Structure of Hebrew Narrative* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976).

<sup>37</sup> Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 50.

<sup>38</sup> E.g. Klaus Koch, *The Growth of the Biblical Tradition: The Form-Critical Method* (New York: Scribner, 1969), 122.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Nahkola, *Double Narratives in the Old Testament: The Foundations of Method in Biblical Criticism*, 103–14.

<sup>40</sup> Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 50.

of the particular literary type. Because they focus on the “generalization” of the literary type, its rigid, formal structure is mostly emphasized. In this methodological perspective, the thematic variants and specific literary features of the text tend to be overlooked.<sup>41</sup> However, if we accept the concept of literary convention, our focus shifts to the certain variants within the repeated text pattern. In this respect, it is considered that the ancient author adapted a distinct “type-scene” to his literature in order to express the specific mood and purpose.<sup>42</sup> Also, the author added variants to the literary pattern and content to stress *his own literary intent*. The variants could be considered as the “directional markers” for the essential intent of the text.<sup>43</sup> With regard to the literary balance between the existing pattern and the variants, R. Alter mentions as follows:

Convention gives writers of both verse and prose a solid framework in which to construct their own discourse, but good writers always exert a subtle pressure on convention, in certain ways remaking it as they build within it.<sup>44</sup>

Alter’s research proves that the variants within the repeated narrative pattern do not occur just randomly, but occur *intentionally* as essential elements of the narrative. Based on this methodological assumptions, he provides the particular individualities of several narratives which commonly adapt the Annunciation type-scene. Within the common pattern of the annunciation of heroic birth, the unique intent and central theme of each narrative are recognized by its peculiarity. For example, in the birth story of Isaac, we can find various peculiarities distinct from the other annunciation type-scenes: 1) The annunciation is only addressed to Abraham. 2) The laughter of Sarah is particularly emphasized. 3) The son’s birth is postponed for more than a chapter and a half. According to Alter, these particularities of the type-scene reflect the following specific intents of the author: 1) The marginal role of Sarah is

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<sup>41</sup> See. Knierim, “Old Testament Form Criticism Reconsidered,” 456. R. Knierim points out that “If form criticism dogmatically holds to strictly morphological criteria, it can no longer claim genre as the central category by which texts and text-types are governed and understood.”

<sup>42</sup> Robert Alter, “How Convention Helps Us Read: The Case of the Bible’s Annunciation Type-Scene,” *Proof 3*, no. 2 (1983): 127–28. When the recurrent pattern is recognized as the “convention”, whoever can access to it and freely adapt it to his own literature. Therefore the recurrent pattern of the different texts could not be the explicit evidence for the literary influence of the primary one to another. Alter thinks that the transmission history of the literature or the literary allusion could not be discussed by the mechanical repetition of the narrative pattern.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>44</sup> Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 141.

presumed. 2) The miraculous character of the event – the child’s birth from the barren mother - is heightened. 3) The postponement of the fulfillment emphasizes the tension between Sarah’s skeptical laughter and God’s solemn assurance to her and to Abraham. Also, by inserting two other episodes (Lot and his daughters, Abimelech) which describe the danger of being cut off without an offspring, the fulfillment of G-d’s promise for the progeny is explicitly reinforced.<sup>45</sup> In light of the literary convention, the approach to the repeated pattern ought to be much more “flexible” than Gunkel’s rigid genre criticism.<sup>46</sup>

The methodological criteria of the “flexible” approach to the literary pattern could be summarized as follows:

- 1) The recurrent pattern is understood as a literary convention.
- 2) The literary convention is adapted by the author for the specific mood or need of the text.
- 3) The author’s intent is expressed through the individuality of the text.
- 4) The setting is found in the specific circumstances of the author or the text.

In view of these methodological criteria, I plan to approach the “call narrative type-scene” and suggest a new understanding of Esther 4 in light of it, which has not been attempted so far. However, determining the literary type-scene of a biblical literature is very difficult task. In the following section, the methodological issues of determining the call narrative type-scene will be discussed.

## **1.2. The Methodological Issues in Call Narrative: Rigid and Flexible Approaches**

How should we define the call narrative type-scene? The traditional form criticism focused on the formal elements of the call narrative. Thus, based on the traditional form criticism, several scholars

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<sup>45</sup> For more discussions, see Alter, “How Convention Helps Us Read,” 120–6.

<sup>46</sup> See Knierim, “Old Testament Form Criticism Reconsidered,” 457–58. The flexible approach to the literary pattern was already introduced by R. Knierim. He particularly emphasizes the interactions between various typologies of the text (structure/scheme/genres, setting, content/mood/ function/intention). And he demands to focus on various elements of the text: 1) the structure of the text, 2) the individuality and 3) the comparison with the typical structure. In his methodology, the individuality of the text is mostly emphasized. He prefers to use the flexible and broad terminology, “text-types” rather than “genres” which defines strict literary form. And in the matter of “setting”, it has to be found in the specific circumstances of the author or the text, not in the text-types or genres.

offered their own formal criteria in order to classify certain texts as belonging to the call narrative genre.

It was N. Habel who suggested the systematic formal structure of the call narrative.<sup>47</sup> The aim of his research is to trace the “historical development” of the call narrative genre in biblical literature.<sup>48</sup> Adopting the rigid criteria to the classification of literary genre, he investigates the “common literary structure” between the early heroic call narratives<sup>49</sup> and the prophetic call narratives.<sup>50</sup> The heroic call narratives are generally assumed as pre-exilic texts, and they present the call of appointee to the salvific mission. The prophetic call narratives are relatively late (B.C.E. 8<sup>th</sup> c. or exilic) compared to heroic call narratives. They depict the call of an appointee to the prophetic task. Both the heroic and prophetic call narratives depict the call of an appointee to a certain task.

Habel assumes that the formal characteristics of prophetic call narratives originated from the earlier heroic call narratives, such as Moses’ and Gideon’s call narratives. He classifies six literary elements of the call narrative based on the formal structure of Moses’ and Gideon’s call narrative as follows: *divine confrontation*, *introductory word*, *commission*, *objection*, *reassurance*, and *sign*. At the beginning of the call, the appointee confronts the divine being (מלאך יהוה). And the divine commission is prefaced by an introductory word, such as “YHWH is with you!” and the commission is followed. In the commission, the technical verbs הלך, שלח are frequently mentioned. However the commission is objected by the appointee because of the burden of commission. Responding to the rejection of the appointee, the commission is reassured by the divine promise, such as “I will be with you” (כי אהיה עמך). Finally the divine commission is assured again by the divine sign (אות).

Habel asserts that these criteria fit well with both the heroic and the prophetic call narratives. He also points out that the coherent formulas are also found among other various call narratives.<sup>51</sup> He explains the function of the coherent call narrative genre as follows:

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<sup>47</sup> Habel, “The Form and Significance of the Call Narratives,” 297–323.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 297.

<sup>49</sup> Moses (Exod. 3:7-4:17); Gideon (Judg. 6:11-17)

<sup>50</sup> Jeremiah (Jer. 1:3-16); Isaiah (Isa. 6:1-13); Second Isaiah (Isa. 40:1-11); Ezekiel (Ezek. 2:1-3:3)

<sup>51</sup> Habel, “The Form and Significance of the Call Narratives,” 299–300. For example, in the scene of divine commission, the “technical verbs” הלך and שלח appear. In the objection, “I” (אני) is significantly emphasized in order to express the “personal element.”

The use of such a form or *Gattung* to delineate the traditions concerning the call of an individual does not nullify the reality of a call experience as such, but it does color and modify the formulation of that experience as it is related to subsequent generations of Israel.<sup>52</sup>

He emphasizes the “general function” of the call narrative. He asserts that “by using the same call *Gattung* the prophets in question establish a link with the past history of Israel.”<sup>53</sup> On the basis of the possible transmission history of form, Habel attempts to prove direct thematic or literary continuity between the heroic and the prophetic call narratives. Hence, he argues that “the prophets are successors to the saviors of old. Thus for Jeremiah it was not only a question of claiming to be prophet like Moses, but also of extending the historical line of continuity from the ancient mediators via the divine commission and its form.”<sup>54</sup>

W. Richter also attempts to investigate the origin of the prophetic call narrative. Methodologically, however, he acknowledges that the pattern could be varied according to its context.<sup>55</sup> He argues that the call narrative pattern presented by Habel is much generalized and simplified,<sup>56</sup> and he presents the refined “call schema”<sup>57</sup> in pre-prophetic call narratives (Moses (J/E), Gideon, Saul).<sup>58</sup> He particularly argues that the motif of divine confrontation should be excluded from the pre-prophetic call,<sup>59</sup> because he considers the divine confrontation to be a later phenomenon.<sup>60</sup>

By eliminating the element of *divine confrontation*, he could include another type of call

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 305.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 316.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> W. Richter distinguishes confusing two terms of the Form Criticism. According to him, whereas “form” concerns a single text, “genre” concerns a general text type. In this way, he tries to avoid the methodological error which generalizes the pattern. Wolfgang Richter, *Exegese als Literaturwissenschaft: Entwurf einer Alttestamentlichen Literaturtheorie und Methodologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971), 46. For the matter of terminology, also see Blum, “Formgeschichte - A Misleading Category? Some Critical Remarks,” 32–35.

<sup>56</sup> Richter, *Die Sogenannten Vorprophetischen Berufungsberichte*, 142. n.12.

<sup>57</sup> Richter calls the pattern by the term “call schema” (*Schemata der Berufung*). He thinks that this schema could be taken up variously and brought into the other genres. Ibid., 137–140. Richter’s approach is followed by B. Long. He suggests that the combination of the call schema of Moses and divine epiphany (Exod. 3) are forming the “Vision Report”.; Burke O. Long, “Prophetic Call Traditions and Reports of Visions,” *ZAW* 84 (1972): 494–500.

<sup>58</sup> See the synoptic table in Richter, *Die Sogenannten Vorprophetischen Berufungsberichte*, 138.

<sup>59</sup> He think that the motif of epiphany in Judg. 6 is the secondary addition. Ibid., 146.

<sup>60</sup> Richter asserts that the motif of the divine revelation is like the confessional formulas and it reflects the setting of the sanctuary. Therefore he considers that Isaiah’s call which is more visible scene is later than Jeremiah’s call.

narrative presenting the human appointer (1Sam. 9). He suggests the *call schema* of the salvation narrative, which consists of five elements: the *description of distress*, *commission*, *objection*, *reassurance* and *sign*. He argues that the commissioning of Saul as נגיד reflects the original setting of the call schema.<sup>61</sup> In Richter's call schema, נגיד's role is basically that of military savior. Therefore, the element of *national distress* is newly added to the call schema.<sup>62</sup> He considers that this call schema was adapted "literarily" to the narratives of Gideon and Moses for the certain literary intent of call schema. The call of ideal prophet Moses and ideal savior Gideon reflects the establishment of unique authority overwhelming the secular kingship. This authority is also demonstrated by Samuel.<sup>63</sup> Eventually, Richter contends that the writing prophets adapted the call schema to the prophetic literatures. The various themes, *commissioning*, *prophets*, *war* and *savior* (נגיד) are related closely in the call schema.<sup>64</sup> Since the rise of the monarchy in Israel, the political leadership was taken by the king (non-charismatic leader), whereas the prophet took on charismatic leadership. Assigning the נגיד role to their identity through the call schema, the prophet tried to reveal their charismatic leadership overwhelming the secular kingship. In this way, Richter presents the historical continuity of the call schema.

Although Habel and Richter utilize different terminologies and present different approaches to the call narrative pattern, Habel and Richter both try to show the history of the typical form (*Formgeschichte*) and its coherent function. They think that the writing prophets "utilized existing call narrative (or schema)" for their own literary intent. Since Habel and Richter assume that the distinct formal pattern possesses a crucial literary function, they particularly focus on those rigid criteria. Thus they bring the fundamental idea of the traditional form criticism, that certain texts sharing a typical pattern present the same theme and function.

However, there are considerable methodological problems here. First of all, in their method,

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<sup>61</sup> W. Richter considers that נגיד was the pre-monarchical institution and it was derived from the northern tribal traditions. Therefore he thinks that this title was important for David for his ascent to the ruler of the northern tribes. Richter, *Die Sogenannten Vorprophetischen Berufungsberichte*, 166.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 143–45.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 179–80.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 181.



the individuality of the texts is ignored or at least significantly reduced. As mentioned before, they ignore the individuality of a given story due to their rigid and stereotyped concept of recurrent pattern. Thus, in this method, particular motif is sometimes artificially suited to their fixed pattern. For example, Habel excludes the call of Amos from the call narrative, because it does not fit his categorization perfectly.<sup>65</sup> However, in the case of the absence of explicit *rejection* element in Ezekiel, Habel argues that the motif is *implied* in the reassurance of G-d (Ezek. 2:6, 8).<sup>66</sup> In this regard, his method does not seem to be so coherent. He himself seems to confess that a certain level of flexibility is necessary, though he particularly emphasizes the strict typicality of the text type. This methodological incoherence seems to have arisen from his theoretical understanding on the prophet's self-identification as "YHWH's agent at work in Israel."<sup>67</sup> The elements of Habel's call narrative genre seem to be produced for supporting his theoretical assumption on the self-identification of the prophets. In this respect, the motif of *divine confrontation* is indispensable and the call narratives lacking this motif were excluded from Habel's call narrative genre.

Richter's call schema also has similar methodological problems. His call schema was derived from Richter's own historical perspective on the relation between נגיד and prophet. Richter assumes that the prophet's self-identification originated from the "נגיד", who owned the "charismatic military leadership." For Richter, the motif of *divine confrontation* is not necessary, because נגיד is basically a secular leader. With regard to the reference to divine messenger in Moses' and Gideon's call, Richter considers the motif of the divine being as a later intrusion.<sup>68</sup> The rigid criteria of Habel and Richter's call narrative are based on their theoretical understanding on the self-identification of the prophets.

Secondly, the evidence of Habel and Richter's argument on *Sitz Im Leben* is very scant. As already mentioned, they attempt to present the different *Sitz Im Leben* of the call narrative based on their own theoretical assumptions on the origin of prophets' self-identification. Habel suggests that the

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<sup>65</sup> Habel thinks that the scene of Amos's call is to depict the "G-d's imminent intervention into the course of Israel's history." Habel, "The Form and Significance of the Call Narratives," 306.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 313, 316. Habel's notion is followed by Phinney. D. Nathan Phinney, "The Prophetic Objection in Ezekiel IV:14 and Its Relation to Ezekiel's Call," *VT* 55, no. 1 (2005): 75–88.

<sup>67</sup> Habel, "The Form and Significance of the Call Narratives," 317.

<sup>68</sup> Richter, *Die Sogenannten Vorprophetischen Berufungsberichte*, 85–87.

*Sitz Im Leben* of the call narrative is the commission ceremony of the ambassadors or messengers. He assumes that the elements of the call narrative genre reflect the ceremony order of the special commission.<sup>69</sup> However, we cannot find any explicit historical evidence whether the ancient ceremony of commissioning was conducted in the same order presented in Habel's call narrative genre. Habel only provides Gen. 24 as the reflection of *Sitz Im Leben*. However, it seems that his analysis of Gen. 24 is considerably stereotyped.<sup>70</sup> This will be discussed in detail later. Richter also presents the theoretical *Sitz Im Leben* – as the commissioning of the נָגִיד. He also offers just one example of the realization of *Sitz Im Leben* (1Sam. 9-10). But the explicit mention of נָגִיד appears only in 1Sam. Thus the direct literary relation between 1Sam. 9-10 and other two call narratives (Gideon, Moses) are not convincingly established.<sup>71</sup> Besides the typical pattern, in order to confirm the literary dependence between the two narratives, sufficient examples of literary evidences are required.<sup>72</sup>

Although Habel and Richter helpfully offer numerous elements of the call narrative pattern, their rigid criteria cannot help us understand the call narrative pattern in a broader manner. We ought to have the primary focus on the literary characteristic of the call narrative pattern, rather than on its historical development. The historical *Sitz Im Leben* and the historical development of the call narrative could not be revealed without explicit literary and historical evidences. Moreover, if we just focus on the formal typicality of the pattern, we may overlook individual literary characteristics. Thus, I plan to approach the call narrative based on purely literary perspective, not on the theoretical, social, or historical setting beyond the narrative. For this task, it is important to recognize that we should observe not only the typicality of the text, but also its peculiarities. Habel and Richter also acknowledge the

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<sup>69</sup> Habel, "The Form and Significance of the Call Narratives," 322.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 321–22.

<sup>71</sup> The research on the literary dependency between different call narratives is done recently by Shalom-Guy. She convincingly proves that the close and direct literary relationship could be found only between Moses' and Gideon's call type-scene. For her arguments, she reveals the additional components only appearing in the call narrative of Moses and Gideon: an expected revelation, national distress, fire and fear inspired by an encounter with divinity. These individualities show the special relationship between different two call narratives. See Hava Shalom-Guy, "The Call Narratives of Gideon and Moses: Literary Convention or More?," *JHebS* 11 (2011): 1–19.

<sup>72</sup> On the methodological criteria on the narrative analogy, the modern scholars emphasizes the strict allusion between two narratives. See Joshua A. Berman, *Narrative Analogy in the Hebrew Bible: Battle Stories and Their Equivalent Non-Battle Narratives* (Leiden ; Boston: Brill Academic Pub, 2004).

peculiarities of the text, but they consider them as rather insignificant. They overlook the fact that the various narratives including the common narrative pattern do not speak in the same voice. While the certain typicality of the text makes us see the narrative in a specific perspective, we can find its own color from its peculiarities.

Thus we need to reconsider the literary characteristic of the call narrative. When we simply think of the meaning of a call narrative without any prejudice, what comes to mind? We need to focus on the broader understanding of the call narrative pattern, rather than on its smaller elements. The term “call” implies the process of “commission” of an “appointee” by the “appointer.” And the commission may include the elements of a “certain mission” given to the appointee and the “change of the appointee’s status.” Therefore we can imagine that the basic elements of the call narratives are “appointee”, “appointer”, “change of appointer’s status” and “appointee’s mission.” In this light, it seems to be true that the call narratives fundamentally depict that a “certain appointee is commissioned by the authoritative appointer and the appointee initiates certain mission with the changed status.”<sup>73</sup> All of the call narratives presented by both Habel and Richter actually have these basic elements. If only these basic elements are considered as the criteria of the pattern, Habel’s and Richter’s biblical call narratives could be filed into the same call narrative pattern. From this observation, we may imagine that the particular call narrative including four literary elements (“appointee”, “appointer”, “change of appointer’s status” and “appointee’s mission.”) was a well-known literary pattern among the ancient authors. The other additional elements presented by Habel and Richter are assumed to be the individual variants stressing the author’s own intent. In this regard, the call narrative pattern is understood as a “literary convention” which emphasizes the literary variants within the common literary pattern, rather than a “typical genre.”

If we approach the recurrent pattern based on the concept of literary convention, we may have broader perspectives on the call narrative type-scene.<sup>74</sup> The method of the classical form criticism

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<sup>73</sup> Cf. Uriel Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narratives*, trans. Lenn J. Schramm (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 52.

<sup>74</sup> Because, my literary understanding on the recurrent pattern is based on R. Alter’s “literary convention”, I will also use the term of Alter, “type-scene” referring to the recurrent literary pattern.

(*Formgeschichte*) attempts to explain that typical literary pattern itself carries a specific intent of the author. On the contrary, literary convention contends that the typical pattern of a text only offers its basic meaning of the text, and the intent of the author is found in the variants of the individual text. It is natural to introduce the savior or the prophet by the particular type-scene which depicts the process of special commissioning, aiming to show the extraordinary role and the great responsibility of the appointee. However, the author also creates a *unique story* within a certain pattern. Thus a type-scene could be *varied*.<sup>75</sup> If we acknowledge this process of writing, the essential theme of the text has to be found from the “individuality” and “peculiarity”, not from the “typicality”. This methodological task could be done by comparing the various narratives belonging to common narrative type-scene.

Before we proceed to the further methodological adaptation of literary convention to the call narrative, a review of the researches on preceding attempts to adapt the flexible method to the call narratives is due. G. Von Rad and W. Zimmerli commonly recognize the literary variants of the call narrative pattern. Von Rad provides minimal formal criteria of the call narrative: the depiction of the first person singular (“I” - appointee). Regarding the first person singular in the prophetic call, Von Rad emphasizes that the prophets were called to abandon the fixed orders of religion, and the call placed them in *complete isolation*.<sup>76</sup> Thus, according to Von Rad, “the act of writing down an account of it was aimed at those sections of the public in whose eyes he had to justify himself.”<sup>77</sup> In the prophetic call, “I” delivers the justification of the prophets’ extraordinary task and role. Based on this assumption Von Rad categorizes the broad biblical narratives (the call of Elijah, Samuel and Moses) as the call narrative.<sup>78</sup> He also acknowledges that the important elements, *rejection* and *divine council* (1Kgs. 22:19-22) can be omitted.<sup>79</sup>

W. Zimmerli also presents the specific individuality of the call narrative in the prophetic literatures. He focuses on the different narrative settings between the call narrative of Jeremiah (Jer.

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<sup>75</sup> Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, 141.

<sup>76</sup> Gerhard Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology. Vol. 2*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1965), 54–55.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>78</sup> Von Rad presented various narratives belonging to the call narrative as follows: Amos 7-9; Isaiah 6; Jeremiah 1; Ezekiel 1-3; Isaiah 40:3-8; Zechariah 1:7-6:8; 1Kgs 19:19ff; 1Sam 3:1ff.; Exod 3-4 (E); *Ibid.*, 55–56.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

1:4-10) and Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:1-3:15). Whereas the first scene depicts the *personal confrontation with the divine being* (oracular), the latter scene shows the confrontation with the *divine council* (visionary).<sup>80</sup> He points out the important variant of the second scene. In the second call narrative, the element of *rejection* is omitted. Zimmerli argues that the second scene emphasizes the *overwhelming call* by presenting the motif of divine council, on the contrary to the type of the first scene, *protested call*.<sup>81</sup> Von Rad and Zimmerli adapt the “flexible” criteria to the call narrative to some extent. In this manner, they accept the variants of the pattern and try to find the peculiar characteristics of the individual text.

J. Ackerman attempts to supplement the rigid method of Richter by a more flexible approach.<sup>82</sup> Adapting the criteria of Richter more flexibly to his research, Ackerman argues that Judg. 4:6-9 could be read as a call narrative: The *national distress* is recognized allusively by the appeal for help in the introduction (4:6). The literary form of *commission* is also well presented by the varied *Retterformel*, לך ומשכת (v.6), distinguished from Richter’s *Retterformel*, לך והושיע.<sup>83</sup> Ackerman focuses on the intransitive usage of משׁך in v.6, in contrast to the transitive usage of משׁך in v.7. It expresses the author’s own focus on the peculiar role of Barak and YHWH. In the call of Barak, Barak’s role is relatively reduced (v.6 ומשכת) and YHWH has the responsibility to draw out enemy (v.7\* ... ומשכתי ... את-סיסרא).<sup>84</sup> And the element of *objection* occurs in v.8 stressing the importance of Deborah’s presence in the battle. The *assurance* is expressed by Deborah’s promise (instead of YHWH’s) for the join with Barak (v.9\* והלך אלך עמך), which also stresses Deborah’s ability to speak on YHWH’s behalf. Finally the sign is given to Barak by the form of the prediction as the fulfillment of oracle (v.9\* אפס ... כי לא תהיה e.g. Exod. 3:12).<sup>85</sup> Ackerman also points out the formal peculiarity which the word play

<sup>80</sup> The call of Moses and Gideon are categorized as the first type and 1Kgs. 22 and Isa. 6 are categorized as the second type.

<sup>81</sup> Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel I: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, trans. Ronald Ernest Clements, Hermeneia - a critical and historical commentary on the Bible (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 96–98.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. James S. Ackerman, “Prophecy and Warfare in Early Israel: A Study of the Deborah-Barak Story,” *BASOR*, no. 220 (1975): 5–13.

<sup>83</sup> Richter’s *Retterformel* comprises of two technical terms, יהׁשׁיע and הלׁך (in hiphil). The combination of two terms occurs in Judg. 6:14; 1Sam. 9:16. He assumes that this phrase explicitly presents the role of נגיד as the both of military and charismatic leader. See. Richter, *Die Sogenannten Vorprophetischen Berufungsberichte*, 158–166.

<sup>84</sup> Ackerman, “Prophecy and Warfare in Early Israel,” 8. n.10.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

with הל"ך significantly governs the narrative (9 times). He thinks that several literary variants were caused from this word play.<sup>86</sup> Although Ackerman's approach is basically *Formgeschichte*,<sup>87</sup> he seems to offer wisely the individuality of Barak's call by adopting the flexible approach to the literary pattern.

Y. Amit also demonstrates the flexible approach to the recurrent pattern. Using her own term, the *patterned scene*, Amit mentions that "certain narratives which contain the same motifs are not necessary to have also same order."<sup>88</sup> She compares two stories of "consecration"<sup>89</sup>: the consecration of Gideon (Judg. 6:11-24) and Moses (Exod. 3:1-4:17). She focuses on the individuality of the consecration of Moses differentiated from Gideon, rather than on the typical pattern of the narratives. In the consecration of Moses, she finds that there is a special "extension" of the stages of *refusal*, *encouragement* and *signs* with a different order. This individuality reflects the unique intention of the author which emphasizes the great responsibility and important mission of Moses, the greatest among the Israelite leaders.<sup>90</sup>

In a similar methodological perspective, U. Simon also offers very flexible criteria of the call narrative. In his book, he categorizes the call of Samuel (1Sam 3) as a call narrative.<sup>91</sup> 1Sam 3 was not classified as a call narrative by preceding scholars because of several formal variants. Richter categorizes the call of Samuel as his *first prophetic experience*, because this scene lacks the formal elements of Richter's call schema.<sup>92</sup> Simon argues that "This [Richter's] strange distinction, which contradicts the clear evidence of the narrative itself, illustrates how the form criticism misses the mark when it is based on the assumption that a literary genre is a rigid paradigm from which only minimal deviation is allowed."<sup>93</sup> Simon tries to see the broader context of the narrative. He emphasizes that the

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Based on the formal study of Judg. 4:6-9, Ackerman in fact aims to argue that the "military figures were at times empowered to lead and given oracular guidance by visionaries speaking in YHWH's behalf even before Samuel." (Ibid., 7.) He eventually contends that "through divine oracle she [Deborah] commissions the leader, assuring him [Barak] victory (4:6-9) and proclaiming the day on which YHWH has delivered the enemy into Israel's power (4:14)." (Ibid., 10.)

<sup>88</sup> Yaira Amit, *Reading Biblical Narratives: Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 66; Yaira Amit, *The Book of Judges: The Art of Editing* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 1999), 254.

<sup>89</sup> This is Amit's own terminology for "call narrative"

<sup>90</sup> Amit, *Reading Biblical Narratives*, 65-67.

<sup>91</sup> Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narratives*, 51-72.

<sup>92</sup> Richter, *Die Sogenannten Vorprophetischen Berufsberichte*, 175.

<sup>93</sup> Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narratives*, 53.

prophetic call narrative reflects the revolutionary change in the prophet's status. And this theme is common between the prophetic call narrative and the call of Samuel.<sup>94</sup> Based on his flexible approach to the call narrative pattern, he presents five narrative components of the 1Sam. 3: *initial fitness, initial error, apprehension and misgivings, the mission is imposed on the messenger against his will and initial recognition*.<sup>95</sup> He does not say that these components do not have to be strictly adopted to other call narratives. Rather, he stresses why the call of Samuel came to show its own specific features, such as the *help of Eli* during the process of commission. Simon explains that this specific variant reflects that Samuel is still a young boy who does not recognize the presence of the divine being. Thus it is assumed that this particular narrative setting and intent modified the formal structure.<sup>96</sup>

These flexible approaches to the recurrent pattern are commonly focused on the variants of the individual narrative, not only on the typical features. Literary variants are found to explicitly reflect the specific intent of the author. This flexible approach to the recurrent narrative pattern can help us to understand Esther 4 as a call narrative type-scene. For this purpose, the relation between the typicality and the individuality of the call narrative type-scene has to be redefined. It is true that the individuality of the text has to be observed, after its typicality of a certain pattern is recognized. In the following section, I will redefine the typicality and individuality of the call narrative type-scene.

### **1.3. Typicality and Individuality of Call-Narrative**

What allows us to consider a certain text as a call narrative? Although the individuality of the text offers the actual intent and meaning, on a certain level, the typicality of the text would be an appropriate starting point for the study of the call narrative type-scene. As I have argued, though Habel and Richter already presented the typicality of the call narrative type-scene, they produced criteria that were too rigid. We need a more essential and minimized typicality of the call-narrative type-scene in a broader sense. Following Simon's definition of the call narrative type-scene, I presented above the

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<sup>94</sup> Simon focuses on the beginning and the end of the narrative. In the beginning, Samuel was the just servant of Eli (1Sam 3:1). However he becomes the legitimate prophet of Lord after the divine call (3:20); Ibid., 52.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 54–55.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 60–61.

several essential and typical elements of the call narrative type-scene: “appointer”, “appointee”, “change of appointees’ status” and “appointee’s mission.” However, this is still a deductive assumption. A more conclusive typicality of the call narrative type-scene has to be brought through the inductive observations of various call narratives. Many scholars have suggested various literary elements of the call narrative type-scene. Several recent scholars present new elements for an enhanced understanding of the call narrative type-scene. Thus we have numerous elements of the call narrative type-scene up to this point. It seems that each element expresses typical or individual characteristics. Thus it is necessary to reevaluate if each element is related to the typicality or the individuality of the type-scene. I will try to bring all the biblical call narrative type-scenes suggested by the preceding researches and compare the elements of each call narrative type-scene. Should we find the most common elements among the different call narrative type-scenes, they can be classified as the essential typical elements.

The individuality of the call narrative type-scene ought to be considered in light of literary characteristic of the broader text which includes the call narrative type-scene. Habel and Richter made the basic distinction between the heroic call and the prophetic call. It seems that their distinction was derived from a diachronic perspective, in which the prophetic call is dated later than the heroic call. However, when we approach the call narrative type-scene via the method of literary convention, synchronic perspective is required. Then, we ought to focus on the thematic and formal peculiarities of each call narrative type-scene in the synchronic perspective. In this light, the call narrative type-scene is to be distinguished basically based on the characteristic of the appointee’s role. The heroic call narratives commonly depict the appointee’s role of military savior during the crisis of Israel. And the prophetic call narratives present the appointee as taking on the prophetic task to deliver the divine judgement to the people. We can also find the call of the ambassador which reflects the commission to an ordinary mission given by the human authority. Furthermore, each of the classified call narrative type-scenes can again be distinguished by the additional individual elements.

The typicality and the individuality of the call narrative type-scene will be revealed by the following synoptic table of biblical call narrative type-scene.



The Various Elements of Call Narrative Type-Scene<sup>97</sup>

	Appointee	Appointer	Distress	Suitability for Mission (Initial Fitness)	Ordinary Life before the Call (Unexpected Call)	Fear of G-d	Fire	Divine Confrontation	Ignorance of Situation (Initial Error)	Personal Address <sup>98</sup>	Commission
Call of Ambassador	Servant of Abraham (Gen. 24)	Abraham (lord)	-	v.2a עבדו זקן המשל בכל אשר לו	-	-	-	-	-	v.2b שים נא ירך תחת ירכי	vv.3-4 תלך ולקחת אשה
Call of Military Leader / Savior	Moses (Exod. 3-4)	מלאך יהוה	3:7 עני עמי	*2:2 כי טוב הוא *2:12 Concern for People	3:1 ומשה היה ראה	3:6 כי ירא	3:2 אש מתוך הסנה	3:2 וירא מלאך יהוה	3:3 מדוע לא-יבער הסנה	3:4b משה משה	3:10 לכה ואשלחך ... והוצא את עמי
	Gideon (Judg. 6)	מלאך יהוה	vv.1-6 ויזעקו	v.11 Protest v.13 Concern for People	v.11 חבט חטים בגת	v.22-23 אל-תירא	v.21 ותעל האש מן-הצור	v.11 ויבא מלאך יהוה וישב	v.13 אדני	v.12 ויאמר אליו .. גבור החיל	v.14 לך .. והושעת
	Barak (Judg. 4)	Deborah (Judge, Prophetess?)	v.3 ויזעקו	-	-	-	-	-	-	v.6a ותשלח ותקרא לברק	vv.6b-7 לך ומשכת
	Saul (1Sam. 9-10)	Samuel (Prophet)	9:16b צעקתו	9:2 אין איש מבני ישראל טוב ממנו	9:3-4 ויעבר בארץ ...	-	-	-	9:18 אי-זה בית הראה	9:19 ואכלתם עמי היום	10:1 משחך יהוה על-נחלתו לנגיד
Call of Prophet	Samuel (1Sam. 3)	G-d (Eli as Mentor)	-	*2:26 הלך וגדל וטוב	v.3 שמואל שכב	-	v.3a נר אלהים	vv.4,6,8,10 ויקרא יהוה	vv.5,6,8 הנני כי-קראת	vv.4,6,8,10 שמואל שמואל	vv.11-14 והגדתי לו
	Isaiah (Isa. 6)	Divine Council	-	-	-	v.5 אוי לי כי נדמייתי	v.4 ימלא עשן	v.1 אדני ישב על כסא	-	vv.8-9a ואשמע את-קול .. ויאמר	vv.9-10 לך ואמרת לעם Prophecy of Doom
	Jeremiah (Jer. 1)	G-d	-	-	-	-	-	v.4 ויהי דבר-יהוה אלי	-	v.5a בטרם בבטן ידעתוך	vv.5b הקדשתוך נביא
	Ezekiel (Ezek. 1-3)	Divine Council	-	-	1:1 ואני בתוך-הגולה	-	1:4,13 אש	1:3 ותהי עליו שם יד-יהוה	-	2:1a ויאמר אלי בן אדם	2:3-4 שולח אני אותך 3:4 לך-בא

<sup>97</sup> Each categorization mostly followed the preceding researches. However, in several disputable cases, I made the correction based on literary evidence. For example, Habel considers that the motif of rejection appears “indirectly”. However I followed the assumption of Zimmerli who excludes this motif from Ezekiel’s call, because the motif of objection does not occur literally. I also added my labeling to several elements in order to enhance the understating on the elements. The original labels remain in parenthesis.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. Habel, “The Form and Significance of the Call Narratives,” 298–99. In Habel’s categorization, *the introductory word* includes both of the personal address and the historical background. However the historical background is the specific character of the heroic call as Richter argues. Therefore, I divided the element of *the introductory word* into the *distress* and the *personal address*.

	Appointee	Revealing Unsuitability (Apprehension)	Objection	Persuasion (Reassurance)	Mission Against the will	Evidence of Success (Sign) <sup>99</sup>			Initial Recognition	
						a	b	c	by public	by oneself
Call of Ambassador	Servant of Abraham (Gen. 24)	v.5 אולי לא-תאבה האשה ללכת אחרי	-	v.7b ישלח מלאכו לפניך	-	-	-	v.7a דבר-לי .. נשבע לי ..	v.18 אדני v.31 בוא ברוך יהוה	-
Call of Military Leader / Savior	Moses (Exod. 3-4)	4:1 לא יאמינו לי 4:10 לא איש דברים אנכי	3:11 מי אנכי כי אלך 4:13 שלח-נא ביד-תשלח	3:12a אהיה עמך 4:11-12 אהיה עם-פיך	-	4:2-9 האות	3:12b האות	-	4:28-31 ויאמן העם	-
	Gideon (Judg. 6)	v.15b אלפי הדל .. ואנכי הצעיר	v.15a במה אושיע את ישראל	v.16 אהיה עמך	-	vv.17-21 אות	-	-	v.32 ויקרא-לו .. ירבעל	-
	Barak (Judg. 4)	v.8 ואם (לא) תלכי עמי	v.8b לא אלך	v.9a הלך אלך עמך	-	-	v.9b ביד-אשה ימכר יהוה את סיסרא	-	v.10 ויעל ברגליו עשרת אלפי	-
	Saul (1Sam. 9-10)	9:21a אנכי מקטני .. ומשפחתי הצערה	9:21b ולמה דברת אלי 10:21-22 נחבא אל-הכלים	10:7 האלהים עמך	-	-	10:2-13 האותות	-	10:24 ויאמרו יחי המלך	-
Call of Prophet	Samuel (1Sam. 3)	v.15 ושמואל ירא מהגיד את המראה אל עלי	-	v.17 כה יעשה לך אלהים וכה יוסיף אם תכחד	v.18 ויגד-לו שמואל את-כל-הדברים	-	-	-	v.20 כי נאמן שמואל לנביא ליהוה	-
	Isaiah (Isa. 6)	-	-	vv.11b-13 Reassurance of Prophecy of Doom	v.11a עד-מתי אדני	-	-	-	v.6 וחטאתך תכפר v.8 הנני שלחני	-
	Jeremiah (Jer. 1)	v.6 לא-ידעתי דבר כי נער אנכי	-	vv.7-8, 17-19 אל-תירא מפניהם .. אתך אני להצלך	*17:16 ויום אנוש לא התאויתי	-	-	-	v.9 נתתי דברי בפיך	-
	Ezekiel (Ezek. 1-3)	-	-	2:6-7 אל-תירא מהם 3:9 כשמיר חזק מצר נתתי מצחך	3:14 ואלך מר בחמת רוחי	-	-	-	-	3:1-3 ויאכלני את המגלה הזאת

\*In the synoptic table above, the typicality of the call narrative type scene is marked by colors. Orange colored elements are the typicality occurring in all the call narratives. Green colored elements are the particular typicality of the heroic call and Blue colored ones are the typicality of the prophetic call narratives.

<sup>99</sup> Ackerman correctly points out the two types of signs in the call narrative type scenes: “(a) feast of magic or special knowledge intended to win belief; and (b) predictions of an event which will happen as a part of, or as a result of, the oracle’s fulfillment (Exod. 3:12; 1Sam. 2:34; Isa. 7:10-17). Ackerman, “Prophecy and Warfare in Early Israel,” 9. In addition to these two types of signs, I add the third type. (c) It is the retrospective memory as the sign. When Abraham gives the commission to his old servant, he reminds of the divine promise given to himself in the past (Gen. 24:7a).

I categorized the three broad types of the call narratives according to the different characteristic of imposed mission of the appointees. The appointee of the first type is the *secular ambassador*. The servant of Abraham takes on the secular task given by his lord, Abraham. The appointee of the second type is the *military savior*. The military savior is called by the divine being or by the secular authority, and the salvific mission is imposed to the appointee. In the third type, the appointee takes on the *prophetic* task. The appointer of the third type is only the divine being. The appointee takes on the prophetic mission to deliver the judgement of G-d to the people.

As we could see in the synoptic table above, there are several elements shared by all the call narratives. We can also find that several elements are shared only by a certain type of call narrative. The observation on the dynamic structure of the call narrative type-scene would give us a more enhanced understanding on this narrative pattern. In following section, I will discuss the fundamental typicality of the call narrative type-scene and the individuality of its subtypes.

#### (1) The Fundamental Typicality of the Call Narrative Type-Scene – Formal and Psychological Approach

From the synoptic table above, we can assume that four elements are shared by all the call narrative type-scenes. They are *Personal Address*, *Commission*, *Persuasion* and *Initial Recognition*. These four elements reflect fundamental characteristics of the call narrative type-scenes. Thus the fundamental typicality of the call narrative type-scene may be expressed by the following notion: “*the certain commission is personally imposed to the appointee through the authoritative appointer’s persuasion and the appointee’s status is radically changed.*” This definition also includes the essential elements which I’ve theoretically mentioned in the earlier section: “appointee”, “appointer”, “change of the appointer’s status” and “the appointee’s mission.” Therefore, the rigid categorization of the call narrative pattern has to be redefined by this more general and broader definition.

In the call narrative type-scene, the appointer exercises a great authority over the appointee. The appointee may raise an objection or express apprehension, but the appointee finally takes on the

imposed mission. In this process, the persuasion of the appointer seems to offer a very important motivation to make the appointees accept the mission. The appointer tries to persuade the appointee through the promise of divine help, or sometimes through forceful words. The mission is imposed to the appointee *personally*, and this shows the close relationship between the appointer and the appointee. The qualification of the appointee for the certain mission is certified by his close relationship with the authoritative appointer. Furthermore, the motif of the appointee's changed status is commonly emphasized explicitly in this type-scene (*initial recognition*). After the appointee himself or other people recognize the new authoritative role of the appointee, the imposed task begins. From this typicality, we could understand the fundamental characteristic of the call narrative type-scene. This type-scene generally aims to depict the *authoritative role of the new appointee*. In other words, it explicitly tells us that the appointee is the qualified leader for the task. This literary function of the call narrative type-scene has been mentioned already by preceding scholars. Then presently, what additional significant literary implications of the call narrative type-scene can we find?

The process of the commission and acceptance of appointees' new role may be understood well in its psychological aspect. Through the call, the appointees experience a radical transformation of their role and self-image. As I have argued, the call narrative type-scene presents the appointee's radical change. Generally, people wish to live in a stable and predictable world. However, they sometimes confront unexpected and surprising moments, such as public disasters (natural disaster, assassination of politician, etc.) and private losses (injury, death of family member, etc.). These stressful life events frequently induce temporal symptoms of a psychological disorder.<sup>100</sup> However, the stressful life events are not just limited to the experiences of negative events. A more important factor of the stressful life is the *change of life itself*. Humans generally experience important life changes through major life events, such as wedding, starting of job or change to another job, etc. Although these life events are not "bad" experiences, people can also feel the stress derived from such life changes. Thus, Dohrenwend defines the stressful life as "objective events that disrupt or threaten to disrupt the individual's usual

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<sup>100</sup> Bruce Philip Dohrenwend and Barbara Snell Dohrenwend, *Social Status and Psychological Disorder: A Causal Inquiry* (New York: Wiley-Interscience, 1969), 126–30.

activities.”<sup>101</sup> Dohrenwend presents in her research that people are more likely to feel the stress when they experience a “big amount of life change itself,” regardless of its desirability.<sup>102</sup> In this light, it is assumed that a radical change in the call narrative type-scene induces a stressful influence on the appointees who confronted the major life change through the call.

Thus, many appointees reveal the feeling of apprehension or try to reject the mission altogether, when the amount of imposed life change is particularly great for them. The element of *Ordinary Life before the Call (unexpected call)* particularly emphasizes the appointee’s great amount of life change. For example, Moses was just a shepherd of Jethro (Exod. 3:1), when he was abruptly called to be the savior of Israel (v.10). Gideon was absorbed in his own occupation when the divine messenger visited him (Judg. 6:11).<sup>103</sup> Then, the divine messenger surprisingly called Gideon to save the people of Israel from the hands of the Midianites (v.14). They commonly revealed the emotion of fear and apprehension. J. Campbell explains the characteristic of the rejection motif occurring in the call narrative of the myths and folk tales as follows:

The myths and folk tales of the whole world make clear that the refusal is essentially a refusal to give up what one takes to be one’s own interest. The future is regarded not in terms of an unremitting cries of deaths and births, but as though one’s present system of ideals, virtues, goals, and advantages were to be fixed and made secure.<sup>104</sup>

The literature of psychoanalysis abounds in examples of such desperate fixations. What they represent is an impotence to put off the infantile ego, with its sphere of emotional relationships and ideals. One is bound in by the walls of childhood; the father and mother stand as threshold guardians, and the timorous soul, fearful of some punishment, fails to make the passage through the door and come to birth in the world without.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Bruce Philip Dohrenwend and Barbara Snell Dohrenwend, “Class and Race as Status Related Sources of Stress,” in *Social Stress*, ed. Sol Levine and Norman A Scotch (Chicago: Aldine Pub. Co., 1970), 115.

<sup>102</sup> Barbara Snell Dohrenwend, “Life Events as Stressors: A Methodological Inquiry,” *JHSB* 14, no. 2 (1973): 167–75. Also see, Libby O. Ruch, “A Multidimensional Analysis of the Concept of Life Change,” *JHSB* 18, no. 1 (1977): 71–83. Although Ruch insists that the qualitative factors (desirability of life change and area of life change) are important factors for the life change data. But he basically agrees that the quantitative factor of the change is more primary than the qualitative factors.

<sup>103</sup> Eliyahu Assis, *Self-Interest or Communal Interest: An Ideology of Leadership in the Gideon, Abimelech, and Jephthah Narratives (Judg. 6-12)*, VTSup 106 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2005), 28.

<sup>104</sup> Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with A Thousand Faces* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004), 55.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

J. Campbell particularly focuses on the fixation and the separation motif in the heroic call. The appointees feel that they do not want to be separated from their present status and life. After they accept the call, the future looks very obscure and dangerous. They want to remain in the secure present. Thus the appointees' emotion of fear and apprehension are expressed by appealing to their ordinary present status (cf. Exod. 4:10; Judg. 6:15; Jer. 1:6). Jeremiah's rejection implies his psychological boundary of the childhood (Jer. 1:6b כִּי-נֶעַר אֲנִי). Forthwith, G-d requires Jeremiah to break the walls of childhood (v.7aβ אֶל-תְּאֹמַר נֶעַר). Through breaking the walls of childhood and giving up the security of the present, the appointees eventually accept and conduct the imposed mission. In this regard, the call narrative type-scene tries to show that the appointees confronted difficult challenges to move themselves to an unknown future in accordance with their changed status.

Another psychological aspect to be considered is the fact that a change of self-image and personality may also occur through the role change. It is assumed that the one's personality is related to one's role in a society. Kuhn mentions that "Clearly, personality has considerable persistence," and thinks that this persistence is derived from one's persistent role.<sup>106</sup> In other words, change of personality can occur when one's role changes. Thus, the element of *initial recognition* may reflect not only the new role of the appointees, but also their new personality. The appointees throw away the egoistic interest and begin to devote their life to the communal profit. Moses fled Egypt in fear of his life (Exod. 2:15). After the call to be the savior, however, he goes back to Egypt for the salvation of his people. But it seems that certain appointee (e.g. Saul) shows an unchanged personality even after some time has passed since their call.

Raymond Schmitt finds that, at the early stages of the role change, people strongly tend to try to become a new being, separated from the past.<sup>107</sup> Schmitt researched the process of becoming Catholic nuns and he hypothesized that the girls will show a deep religious self-image as the religious training process develops (from postulancy to novitiate and juniorate). At the first stage of change, from the postulancy to novitiate, his hypothesis was right. The girls showed the higher value for their new

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<sup>106</sup> Charles Addison Hickman and Manford Hinshaw Kuhn, *Individuals, Groups, and Economic Behavior* (New York: Dryden Press, 1956), 38.

<sup>107</sup> Raymond L. Schmitt, "Major Role Change and Self Change," *SocR* 7, no. 3 (1966): 319–20.

religious self over their past self-image. However, surprisingly it was found that his hypothesis didn't work at the later stage of the change, from novitiate to juniorate. Actually many of the girls in juniorates showed their religious self-image beginning to fade.<sup>108</sup> Schmitt interprets that this phenomenon reflects "the strong institutionalized stress at the first stage of the change or the beginning of disenchantment at the later stage of religious training."<sup>109</sup>

I take this research to evince an important allusion to the change of appointees' self-image in the call narrative type-scene. At the early stage of the change, the appointees show a strong new self-image. They fully obey the appointers' commandment and instruction and they devote their life to the communal profit. However, Saul began to reveal their egoistic characteristic after the successful achievement of his mission. He no longer listened and obeyed the appointer's commandments. Eventually, he is remembered as failed leader. The moment of the call explicitly emphasizes the radical and positive change of the appointees into a new self-image. However, the broader narrative also shows that the appointee will fail if he does not keep this change permanently.

We have discussed the literary and psychological characteristic of the typical elements of the call narrative type-scene. Now it is necessary to discuss the individual elements of the call narrative type-scene. The individuality of the call narrative type-scene is especially important in order to recognize the intent of the individual narrative. I classified three subtypes of the call narrative type-scene based on the characteristics of imposed role of the appointees: Ambassador, Savior (Hero) and Prophet. I will present how each subtype of the call narrative type-scene reveals its individuality.

## (2) The Call of Ambassador

This subtype is found in Gen. 24. The classification of Gen. 24 as the call narrative type-scene is crucial for my study since the divine appointer is also absent in the call of Esther, Saul and Barak. Habel's earlier assumption deserves to be reviewed, which recognizes Gen. 24 as the reflection of *Sitz Im Leben* of his call narrative genre. He claims that Gen. 24 is the "logical precedent" of the call

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 320–1.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 320–1, n.48.

narrative. And he points out that the essential elements of his call narrative genre are included in Gen. 24. According to him, most elements of the call narratives, *Introductory Word* (vv.34-36), *Commission* (vv.37-38), *Objection* (v.39), *Reassurance* (vv.40-41) and *Sign* (vv.42-48) can be found in Gen. 24. This narrative only lacks the element of *Divine Confrontation*.<sup>110</sup> Habel does not define it as the call narrative since it does not perfectly fit his rigid criteria. Regarding the formal similarity between Gen. 24 and other call narratives of Habel, he mentions that “the narrative of this chapter reflects an archaic practice and tradition from the life of Israel needs little variation. There is no obvious reason to assume that the Jahwistic author reformulated his portrait of a human commissioning in the light of a subsequent *Gattung* involving God’s commissioning of His agent. ... Nevertheless, there is an underlying sequence of presentations which suggests a specific practice ...”<sup>111</sup> He seems to assume that the actual historical practice *existed* and his call narratives and Gen. 24 are derived from the archaic practice of commissioning. However, his notion explicitly shows the logical mistakes of his method. If the archaic practice of commissioning *actually existed* and Habel’s call narratives and Gen. 24 were derived from the same archaic practice, why is that only Gen. 24 cannot be defined as the call narrative? Habel himself reveals his methodological dilemma. As I discussed above, and Habel himself ironically proves, Gen. 24 includes the fundamental typical elements of the call narrative type-scene. Thus the absence of the divine being in Gen. 24 shows a particular call narrative pattern without the element of the divine appointer.

In the call narrative type-scene, the characteristic of appointer is a very important component. In fact, the ability of the appointer is a decisive factor in the achievement of the mission imposed to the appointee. The introductory description of Gen. 24:1, ויהוה ברך את-אברהם בכל implies that the wealth of Abraham was the decisive factor in gaining the consent to marriage.<sup>112</sup> The servant’s suitability to the mission is described by his important role in the house of Abraham. He is old and experienced (v.2 עבדו זקן ביתו המשל בכל-אשר-לו).<sup>113</sup> He also seems to be very close to Abraham; thus the process of

<sup>110</sup> Habel, “The Form and Significance of the Call Narratives,” 320–3.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 320.

<sup>112</sup> Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 162.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*; Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading*



commissioning is conducted personally (v.2 שים-נא ידך תחת ירכי). In this narrative, there is no dramatic scene and the servant takes the imposed mission without an explicit objection. Habel argues that the objection can be found in v.39 (v.5), but this cannot be seen as a plain objection.<sup>114</sup> This verse more likely expresses the servant's simple request for plan-B in case he fails the mission (v.5). Responding to the apprehension of the servant, Abraham reminds him of the divine promise already given to him (v.7a). He persuades the servant by his faithful hope that G-d will send HIS angel (מלאכו) for his mission (v.7b). Finally the servant is commissioned as the representative of Abraham (v.9). Then, he arrives at the city of Nahor and achieves his mission (vv.12-27).

In this narrative, G-d is not directly involved in the fulfillment of the mission, though the divine involvement is indirectly implied through the piety of Abraham and the prayer of his servant. The mission of the servant is to find the proper bride of Isaac, the son of Abraham. The servant takes on the mission to become "Isaac's father." In Gen. 24:18 this servant is called as lord (אדני) by Rebekah. Up to this point this appellation was used only for Abraham. Thus it is understood literarily that the servant came to possess the importance of Abraham.<sup>115</sup> Through the process of commissioning, the servant came to have a new self-image as the advocate of Abraham. This call-narrative type-scene reflects the authoritative role of the servant as the legal representative of Abraham through the call.

### (3) The Call of Savior

The second subtype of the call narrative type-scene is the call of savior. This subtype could be classified again by the characteristic of the appointer. For example, Moses and Gideon are both called by the divine being. Because Moses and Gideon commonly experience theophany, they express the fear of G-d. Contrary to Moses and Gideon, however, Barak and Saul do not confront the presence of G-d directly. The missions are imposed to the appointees by their spiritual mentors who deliver the divine words (Judg. 4:5; 1Sam. 9:17). The existence of the spiritual mentor implies that the power of the

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(Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987), 146.

<sup>114</sup> Habel, "The Form and Significance of the Call Narratives," 321–2.

<sup>115</sup> Lieve Teugels, "The Anonymous Matchmaker: An Enquiry into the Characterization of the Servant of Abraham in Genesis 24," *JSOT* 65 (1995): 15–16.

appointees is limited to secular leadership. Because they are secular leaders who do not have charismatic and spiritual abilities, they have to follow the instruction of the spiritual mentors (Judg. 4:14; 1Sam. 10:1-6). When Saul violated the religious instruction of Samuel, he was abandoned (1Sam. 13:13-14; 15:14-26). Therefore, it is assumed that the distinct type of the appointer is related to the characteristic of the appointee's leadership.

The call of a savior type-scene is much more dramatic than Gen. 24. In this subtype, the salvific mission is imposed to the appointees. The characteristic of salvific mission presumes a situation of crisis. Therefore, the element of *national distress* is particularly depicted at the beginning of the narrative. This element generally contrasts the great military power of the enemy against the weak and oppressed Israel. In a desperate situation of distress, the saviors are called to difficult salvific mission.

The elements of *suitability for mission (initial fitness)* and *ordinary life before the call (unexpected call)* frequently occur in this subtype. It is natural to depict the suitability and fitness of the appointee in order to stress their heroic characteristics. And, as U. Simon mentions, the fitness of the appointees is "counterbalanced by the *initial error*" which implies the ignorance of the appointee about his mission.<sup>116</sup> Along with the element of *unexpected call*, *initial error* emphasizes the appointee's significant amount of change. However, in the call of Barak, these three elements are absent. Contrary to the other heroic figures such as Moses, Gideon and Saul, Barak is a secondary figure compared to the actual heroine, Deborah.<sup>117</sup> It seems that the call of Barak likely stresses Deborah's great authority in commissioning the military leader during the situation of crisis. Thus Barak's heroic character becomes much reduced.

Furthermore, the call of savior type-scene also expresses the elements of *apprehension*, *objection* and *persuasion (reassurance)*. The element of objection particularly reveals the heavy burden of their mission. In Moses' call, these elements are particularly emphasized through their repetition. It illuminates the great responsibility laden as the first leader of Israel.<sup>118</sup>

This type-scene also basically describes the commissioning of the new authoritative appointee.

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<sup>116</sup> Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narratives*, 54.

<sup>117</sup> Robert H. O'Connell, *The Rhetoric of the Book of Judges*, VTSup 63 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 107–8.

<sup>118</sup> Amit, *Reading Biblical Narratives*, 65–67.

However, in this type-scene, the desperate situation and the difficult task of the appointee are much more stressed than Gen. 24. Depicting the great difficulties intended to reveal that the heroic appointee's decision to take on the imposed mission was not so easy.

#### (4) The Call of Prophet

The third subtype of the call narrative type-scene is the call of prophet. The basic task of the prophets is to deliver the divine words to the people relying on divine inspiration.<sup>119</sup> The prophetic call narrative type-scene deliberately depicts the scene of theophany. Since the identity of a prophet is basically a spiritual leader, the occurrence of *divine confrontation* is very essential. The presence of the divine being is sometimes depicted by the image of *fire* in the call narrative type-scene. In the Bible, the image of fire plays a time very important role expressing the theophany. It particularly describes "G-d's powerful manifestation."<sup>120</sup>

The more fundamental characteristic of this type-scene is found in the element of *mission against the will*.<sup>121</sup> In the call of savior type-scene, on the one hand, the appointees express their objections; however, after the persuasion of the appointers, the appointees make a decision to accept the imposed mission. On the other hand, the element of *mission against the will* shows that the appointees reveal their strong reluctance even after their commission. This element commonly appears in the prophetic call narrative type-scene. The reluctance of the prophet would stem from the fact that his task was basically delivering the "divine judgment" to the people. It is important to notice that only the prophet himself took the prophecy of the "divine judgement," and others were totally ignorant. In this respect, the prophetic task made completely isolated the prophet from the contemporary religion and society.<sup>122</sup> This characteristic of the prophetic task is contrary to the savior who took the "salvific mission" for the people of Israel.<sup>123</sup> Samuel was entirely reluctant to deliver the words of judgment to

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<sup>119</sup> John J. Schmitt, "Prophecy (Preexilic Hebrew)," *ABD* 5 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 482.

<sup>120</sup> Vinzenz Hamp, "שׂר (IV. Fire in Connection with God)," ed. Gerhard Johannes Botterweck, Helmer. Ringgren, and David E. Green, *TDOT* (Grand Rapids (Mich.); Cambridge: W.B. Eerdmans, 1990), 424.

<sup>121</sup> Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narratives*, 55.

<sup>122</sup> Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology. Vol. 2*, 177.

<sup>123</sup> In this manner, the call of Moses is excluded from this type-scene, though the task of Moses could be also

Eli's house (1Sam. 3:15). Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel also had to deliver divine judgment and curse to the people of Israel *against their will*.

In this type-scene, the element of *evidence (sign)* is absent. Since the prophets recognize the divine presence from the beginning of the call, they do not request for a specific sign. However, Habel attempts to categorize several scenes of the prophetic call as elements of *sign*. For example, with regard to the call of Jeremiah, he mentions that the “symbolic act of Yahweh extending his compelling hand and touching the prophet’s mouth” (Jer. 1:9-10 וַיִּשְׁלַח יְהוָה אֶת-יָדוֹ) reflects the element of the *sign*.<sup>124</sup> He seems to correctly point out the function of this action which confirms the role of the prophet as a mediator to deliver the divine word.<sup>125</sup> He intends to allude this action to the sign for Gideon and Moses. Habel defines the element of sign as “a further confirmation of the ‘I am with you’ character of the assurance.”<sup>126</sup> However, I assume that the element of *sign* could be categorized as a peculiar way of assurance through the “presentation of אֹת.” In this respect, the *sign* of the heroic call narrative type-scene seems to be distinguished from the “symbolic act” of Jeremiah’s call narrative. The characteristic of sign occurring in Moses’ and Gideon’s call narratives is to be considered as “visual evidence” intended to “persuade” the appointee to accept the difficult mission. The appointee already “has” (Exod. 4:2-9; Judg. 6:17-21) or “will have” (Exod. 3:12) the specific evidence certifying the successful mission.<sup>127</sup> In these call narratives, אֹת is (will be) actualized in front of the appointee. Furthermore, it is important to recognize that the sign generally relates to the ability of the appointer rather than that of the appointee. When the appointer is a divine being, the sign reveals the miraculous ability of the appointer. In this respect, Habel’s criterion for the element of *sign* in the prophetic call narrative has to be reconsidered.

Habel categorizes Jer. 1:7-8 as a *reassurance* and vv.9-10 as a *sign*. Responding to Jeremiah’s apprehension, G-d gives an assurance to Jeremiah through the expression, “I am with you.” (v.8 אֲנִי עִמָּךְ

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considered as the prophetic. However his essential task is to save the people of Israel from Egyptians. Therefore his call is close to the call of savior.

<sup>124</sup> Habel, “The Form and Significance of the Call Narratives,” 309.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 319.

<sup>127</sup> In above synoptic table, I also mentioned the additional category of sign, “retrospective sign” occurring in Gen. 24. This element will be discussed in greater detail later.

אני) And G-d puts HIS words into Jeremiah's mouth (v.9 נתתי דברי בפיך). P. Craigie comments on this verse that "as Ezekiel, in his visionary experience, ate the scroll ([Ezek.] 3:1-3) and thus made the divine word a part of his very being, so too the divine word becomes a part of Jeremiah's being."<sup>128</sup> According to the Craigie's notion, this scene does not focus on the appointer's great ability, but rather stresses the *appointee's new ability* and the *appointee's radical change*: from a poor talker to a prophet. This scene deliberately depicts Jeremiah's "credibility" as the prophet.<sup>129</sup> Therefore this scene has to be distinguished from the category of *sign* occurring in the heroic call narratives. Similarly, the scenes of Ezekiel's eating of book (Ezek. 3:1-3) and Isaiah's purification (Isa. 6:6) are to be considered as the *designation of their changed status* as the credible prophet.<sup>130</sup> Thus I categorized these elements as *initial recognition*.

In the prophetic call narrative type-scene, we can recognize that the appointees' *initial recognition* as the prophet is acknowledged only by themselves and G-d. However, the characteristics of Samuel versus other writing prophets have to be distinguished. Samuel's authority had already been recognized by the people of Israel as that of political and spiritual leader before the emergence of kingship. Contrary to Samuel and some heroic appointees, the prophetic authority of writing prophets was not known to the public at the moment of their commissioning. This peculiar characteristic of the writing prophets' *initial recognition* emphasizes their loneliness and struggle in asserting the credibility of their prophecy.

In this section, I've presented general literary typicality and individuality of the call narrative type-scene. With regard to the individuality, I assume that it is particularly related to the characteristic of the appointee's role and his/her imposed mission. Therefore, if Esther 4 can be read as a call narrative, the particular characteristics of Esther's leadership may be elucidated.

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<sup>128</sup> Peter C. Craigie, Page H. Kelley, and Joel F. Drinkard, *Jeremiah 1-25*, vol. 26, WBC (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 2000), 11.

<sup>129</sup> Georg A. Walser, *Jeremiah: A Commentary Based on Ieremias in Codex Vaticanus*, Septuagint Commentary Series 9 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 199.

<sup>130</sup> Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 136–7.

## **Chapter Two. The Elements of Esther's Call Narrative Type-Scene**

Based on the observation of the formal and thematic dynamics of the ambassador, savior and prophetic call narrative type-scenes, I will discuss the literary characteristics of Esther 4 in light of the call narrative type-scene.

I claim that Esther 4 can also be categorized as the call narrative type-scene. First of all, I will present the literary elements of Esther's call narrative (see the following synoptic table). Then I will observe the essential characteristics of the call narrative type-scene occurring in Esther 4. I have mentioned already that the essential elements of the call narrative type-scene are comprised of "change", "appointer", "appointee" and "mission." These elements offer us the proper starting point to recognize Esther 4 as the call narrative type-scene. Particularly, the essential elements of "Esther's change" and "relation between Mordecai (appointer) and Esther (appointee)" are to be discussed. After those discussions, I will discuss the peculiar characteristics of various literary elements of Esther's call narrative type-scene. The narrative particularities reflected in Esther 4 are revealed in comparison with the other call narratives.

In the following table, we can observe that Esther 4 offers various literary characteristics included in the ambassador, savior and prophetic call narrative type-scenes, though they are partially included in Esther's call narrative. It may be suggested that the author attempted to endow these various roles to Esther.

### The Elements of Esther's Call Narrative Type-Scene

	Appointee	Appointer	Distress	Suitability for Mission (Initial Fitness)	Ordinary Life before the Call (Unexpected Call)	Fear of G-d	Fire	Divine Confrontation	Ignorance of Situation (Initial Error)	Personal Address	Commission
Call of Ambassador	Servant of Abraham (Gen. 24)	Abraham (lord)	-	v.2a עבדו זקן המשל בכל אשר לו	-	-	-	-	-	v.2b שים נא ידך תחת ירכי	vv.3-4 תלך ולקחת אשה
Call of Military Leader / Savior	Moses (Exod. 3-4)	מלאך יהוה	3:7 עני עמי	*2:2 כי טוב הוא *2:12 Concern for People	3:1 ומשה היה ראה	3:6 כי ירא	3:2 אש מתוך הסנה	3:2 וירא מלאך יהוה	3:3 מדוע לא-יבער הסנה	3:4b משה משה	3:10 לכה ואשלחך ... והוצא את עמי
	Gideon (Judg. 6)	מלאך יהוה	vv.1-6 ויזעקו	v.11 Protest v.13 Concern for People	v.11 חבט חטים בגת	v.22-23 אל-תירא	v.21 ותעל האש מן-הצור	v.11 ויבא מלאך יהוה וישב	v.13 אדני	v.12 ויאמר אליו .. גבור החיל	v.14 לך .. והושעת
	Barak (Judg. 4)	Deborah (Judge, Prop hetess?)	v.3 ויזעקו	-	-	-	-	-	-	v.6a ותשלח ותקרא לברק	vv.6b-7 לך ומשכת
	Saul (1Sam. 9-10)	Samuel (Prophet)	9:16b צעקתו	9:2 אין איש מבני ישראל טוב ממנו	9:3-4 ויעבר בארץ ...	-	-	-	9:18 אי-זה בית הראה	9:19 ואכלתם עמי היום	10:1 משחך יהוה על-נחלתו לנגיד
Call of Prophet	Samuel (1Sam. 3)	G-d (Eli as Mentor)	-	*2:26 הלך וגדל וטוב	v.3 שמואל שכב	-	v.3a נר אלהים	vv.4,6,8,10 ויקרא יהוה	vv.5,6,8 הנני כי-קראת	vv.4,6,8,10 שמואל שמואל	vv.11-14 והגדתי לו
	Isaiah (Isa. 6)	Divine Council	-	-	-	v.5 אוי לי כי נדמייתי	v.4 ימלא עשן	v.1 אדני ישב על כסא	-	vv.8-9a ואשמע את-קול .. ויאמר	vv.9-10 לך ואמרת לעם Prophecy of Doom
	Jeremiah (Jer. 1)	G-d	-	-	-	-	-	v.4 ויהי דבר-יהוה אלי	-	v.5a בטרם בבטן ידעתך	vv.5b הקדשתך נביא
	Ezekiel (Ezek. 1-3)	Divine Council	-	-	1:1 ואני בתוך-הגולה	-	1:4,13 אש	1:3 ותהי עליו שם יד-יהוה	-	2:1a ויאמר אלי בן אדם	2:3-4 שולח אני אותך 3:4 לך-בא
Call of Esther	Esther (Esther 4)	Mordecai	vv.1-3 ויזעק	*2:15 אסתר נשאת חן בעיני כל-ראיה	v.4a ותתחלחל המלכה מאד	-	-	-	v.4b ותשלח בגדים להלביש את-מרדכי	v.8 ולהגיד לה ולצוות עליה	vv.7-8 לבוא אל-המלך

	Appointee	Revealing Unsuitability (Apprehension)	Objection	Persuasion (Reassurance)	Mission Against the will	Evidence of Success (Sign) <sup>131</sup>			Initial Recognition	
						a	b	c	by public	by oneself
Call of Ambassador	Servant of Abraham (Gen. 24)	v.5 אולי לא-תאבה האשה ללכת אחרי	-	v.7b ישלח מלאכו לפניך	-	-	-	v.7a דבר-לי .. נשבע לי ..	v.18 אדני v.31 בוא ברוך יהוה	-
Call of Military Leader / Savior	Moses (Exod. 3-4)	4:1 לא יאמינו לי 4:10 לא איש דברים אנכי	3:11 מי אנכי כי אלך 4: 13 שלח-נא ביד-תשלח	3:12a אהיה עמך 4:11-12 אהיה עם-פיך	-	4:2-9 האות	3:12b האות	-	4:28-31 ויאמן העם	-
	Gideon (Judg. 6)	v.15b אלפי הדל .. ואנכי הצעיר	v.15a במה אושיע את ישראל	v.16 אהיה עמך	-	vv.17-21 אות	-	-	v.32 ויקרא-לו .. ירבעל	-
	Barak (Judg. 4)	v.8 ואם (לא) תלכי עמי	v.8b לא אלך	v.9a הלך אלך עמך	-	-	v.9b ביד-אשה ימכר יהוה את סיסרא	-	v.10 ויעל ברגליו עשרת אלפי	-
	Saul (1Sam. 9-10)	9:21a אנכי מקטני .. ומשפחתי הצערה	9:21b ולמה דברת אלי 10:21-22 נחבא אל-הכלים	10:7 האלהים עמך	-	-	10:2-13 האותות	-	10:24 ויאמרו יחי המלך	-
Call of Prophet	Samuel (1Sam. 3)	v.15 ושמואל ירא מהגיד את המראה אל עלי	-	v.17 כה יעשה לך אלהים וכה יוסיף אם תבחד	v.18 ויגד-לו שמואל את-כל-הדברים	-	-	-	v.20 כי נאמן שמואל לנביא ליהוה	-
	Isaiah (Isa. 6)	-	-	vv.11b-13 Reassurance of Prophecy of Doom	v.11a עד-מתי אדני	-	-	-	-	v.6 וחטאתך תכפר v.8 הנני שלחני
	Jeremiah (Jer. 1)	v.6 לא-ידעתי דבר כי נער אנכי	-	vv.7-8, 17-19 אל-תירא מפניהם .. אתך אני להצלך	*17:16 ויום אנוש לא התאויתי	-	-	-	-	v.9 נתתי דברי בפיך
	Ezekiel (Ezek. 1-3)	-	-	2:6-7 אל-תירא מהם 3:9 כשמיר חזק מצר נתתי מצחך	3:14 ואלך מר בחמת רוחי	-	-	-	-	3:1-3 ויאכלני את המגלה הזאת
Call of Esther	Esther (Esther 4)	v.11 לא נקראתי לבוא אל-המלך	-	v.13 אל-תדמי בנפדך	v.16 וכאשר אבדתי אבדתי	-	-	-	-	v.17 ויעש ככל אשר- צותה (by Mordecai and Esther)

<sup>131</sup> The element of evidence (sign) is absent in Esther. But it was substituted by the form of argument. This substitution reflects peculiar characteristic of Esther's call. This will be discussed later in detail.



## 2.1. Essential Characteristics of Esther's Call Narrative

### (1) Remarkable Change of the Appointee's Status

U. Simon acknowledges that the essential element of the call narrative type-scene is the *remarkable change* of the appointee's status through the commissioning. He suggests that 1Samuel 3 could be read as a call narrative. With regard to the literary characteristic of Samuel's call, he focuses on the remarkable change of Samuel's status. Through the call, Samuel changed from the servant of Eli (1Sam 3:1) into a prophet of the Lord (3:20).<sup>132</sup> The radical change of Samuel occurs, particularly, after Samuel experienced the divine presence. W. Richter, however, considered 1Sam 3 as Samuel's first prophetic experience, because it does not fit with his rigid call narrative schema.<sup>133</sup> Simon criticizes W. Richter that he overlooked the element of the remarkable change of Samuel's status. At the beginning and the end of 1Sam 3, the narrator explicitly denotes the transformation of Samuel through his experience of G-d.<sup>134</sup> Therefore, we ought to assume that 1Sam. 3 reflects one of the essential characteristics of the call narrative type-scene: *Samuel was commissioned to prophecy through the divine call*. Furthermore, the remarkable change of Samuel's status leads to the flourishing of the prophecy in Israel: "from scarce to widespread."<sup>135</sup>

The remarkable change of the appointee's status through the call is also commonly found in other call narratives. The explicit change of the appointee's status is well implied in various call narratives, as well as the influence on a community due to the change of the appointee through the call. It eventually changes the circumstances of the appointee's community altogether.

Before Moses' call, the book of Exodus deliberately depicts the obsessed life of the Israelites under the rule of the Egyptians (1:11). Moses was the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter, but he would have a Hebrew identity because he was raised by his Hebrew mother (Exod. 2:7-9). His self-recognition

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<sup>132</sup> Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narratives*, 52.

<sup>133</sup> Richter, *Die Sogenannten Vorprophetischen Berufungsberichte*, 175.

<sup>134</sup> Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narratives*, 52.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

of a Hebrew identity is implied by the fact that Moses considered Hebrews as his brothers (v.11 אחיו).<sup>136</sup> He even tried to intervene in the suffering (vv.11-12) and conflicts of the Hebrews (v.13). However, his “self-leadership” was not recognized by other Hebrews (v.14).<sup>137</sup> It seems that Moses was still considered by other Israelites as a privileged Egyptian abusing his power.<sup>138</sup> However, we can realize that the remarkable personal and communal changes occur after Moses’ call. We can find the revolutionary change of Moses’ status after the experience of divine confrontation at the burning bush (3:2ff). Moses is acknowledged as the authoritative leader by the Israelites (4:29-31). Furthermore, he stands before Pharaoh as the leader of Hebrews, not as an Egyptian (5:1). Eventually the Israelites escape out of Egypt through the charismatic leadership of Moses (12:41). Therefore, it is assumed that Moses’ call is the crucial turning point of the Exodus narrative.

The Gideon narrative also explicitly portrays the remarkable change of Gideon himself and his community through the call. His remarkable change is implied in his alternative name, Jerubbaal (Judg. 6:32). After he destroyed the Baal’s altar, he became the official adversary of the Baalists.<sup>139</sup> Eventually, Gideon brought the Israelites military victory over the Midianites.

In the prophetic call narratives, the remarkable change of the prophets through the call is also obviously depicted. Generally, it is assumed that the prophetic call narratives (Isa. 1-3; Jer 6; Ezek. 1-3) have the function of authenticating the prophetic task.<sup>140</sup> Although the prophetic call narratives do not present the dramatic scene as much as the heroic call narratives do, they obviously reflect the changed status of the prophets, who owned the words of G-d (Isa. 6:7; Jer. 1:9; Ezek. 2:9-3:3).

In the scroll of Esther, the remarkable change within the personality of Esther is a very crucial element which develops the reversal plot. Esther experiences several changes in her life. It is important

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<sup>136</sup> Nahum M. Sarna, *Exodus*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 11.

<sup>137</sup> Jeffrey M. Cohen, “The Call of Moses,” *JBQ* 20, no. 4 (1992): 259–261.

<sup>138</sup> Athena E. Gorospe, *Narrative and Identity: An Ethical Reading of Exodus 4*, BibInt 86 (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2007), 161.

<sup>139</sup> Assis mentions that “the name “Jerubbaal” reflects the Baalists’ hope that Gideon will lose his war against the Midianites as revenge for his attack on the Baal.” Assis, *Self-Interest or Communal Interest*, 50.

<sup>140</sup> Habel, “The Form and Significance of the Call Narratives”; Marvin A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39: With an Introduction to Prophetic Literature* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1996), 20.

to observe the subsequent process of Esther's life changes. The following verses show the important moments of Esther's remarkable life change.

2: 7 וַיְהִי אִמּוֹן אֶת־הַדְּסָה הִיא אֶסְתֵּר בַּת־דָּדוּ כִּי אֵין לָהּ אָב וְאִם וְהַנְּעָרָה יִפְתִּיחַ אֶרֶץ וְטוֹבַת מִרְאָה וּבְמוֹת אֲבִיהָ וְאִמָּהּ לְקַחָהּ מִרְדּוֹ כִּי לֹא לְבַת

2: 8 וַיְהִי בְּהַשְׁמַע דְּבַר־הַמֶּלֶךְ וְדָתוֹ וּבְהַקְבֵּץ נְעָרוֹת רַבּוֹת אֲלִישׁוֹן הַבִּינְיָה אֶלְגִּיד הֲגִי וַתִּלְקַח אֶסְתֵּר אֶל־בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶלְגִּיד הֲגִי שֹׁמֵר הַנְּשִׁים:

2: 17 וַיִּצְאֶהב הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת־אֶסְתֵּר מִכָּל־הַנְּשִׁים וַתִּשְׂאֶחֶן וְחֹסֵד לְפָנָיו מִכָּל־הַבְּתוּלֹת וַיִּשָּׂם כְּתֹר־מַלְכוּת בְּרֵאשֵׁה וַיִּמְלִיכָהּ תַּחַת וְשָׂתִי

4: 16 לֵךְ כְּנוֹס אֶת־כָּל־הַיְּהוּדִים הַנִּמְצָאִים בְּשׁוֹשָׁן וְצוּמוּ עָלַי וְאַל־תֹּאכְלוּ וְאַל־תִּשְׂתּוּ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים לְלֵלָה וַיּוֹם גַּם־אֲנִי וְנַעֲרָתִי אֲצוּם כִּן וּבְכוֹן אָבוֹא אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יָכַדְתִּי וְכֹאֲשֶׁר אָבְדָתִי אָבְדָתִי

The main protagonists of the scroll, Mordecai and Esther are introduced in 2:5-7. Mordecai is introduced by the genealogy of Kish, a Benjaminite. Moreover, the history of exile is also presented in order to explain why Mordecai was living in Shushan (2:5-6). In the historical report of the exile of Jeconiah, however, there are several chronological problems, making it hard to believe that Mordecai is a “historical figure.”<sup>141</sup> Therefore, the presentation of the historical background of Mordecai's exile in 2:7 cannot be understood as “real history.” Rather, we should focus on its literary function within the broader narrative. J. Levenson correctly argues that “It is more likely that the mention of Jeconiah and the exile is intended to give this late book a ‘biblical connection’ and to set its narrative into the larger framework of the history of redemption of the people Israel.”<sup>142</sup> Although we cannot have certainty in the historicity of this verse, it explicitly evokes the desperate memory and trouble of the Jews during the exilic period. It deliberately denotes the fact that the Jews had been exiled and the kingship did not exist anymore.

The depiction of the oppressed people in the foreign land without a king is reminiscent of the introductory part of the salvation narratives of Judges. The depiction of the oppressed Israelites is vividly contrasted with the miraculous salvation at the end of the narrative (e.g. Judg. 6:2-5; 8:28). Esth.

<sup>141</sup> Jeconiah's (Johoiachin) exiled year is 597 B.C.E. And Ahasuerus's (Xerxes) third regnal year (Esth. 1:3) is 483 B.C.E. If Mordecai himself was really exiled, he is over 100 years old at the time of this story. Yaira Amit, “The Saul Polemic in the Persian Period,” in *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period*, ed. Oded. Lipschitz and Manfred. Oeming (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 653; Levenson, *Esther*, 57–58.

<sup>142</sup> Levenson, *Esther*, 58.

2:7 also seems to have a certain literary function similar to the introductory part of the salvation narrative of Judges. The presentation of the exile of Jews contrasts with their great victory (Esth. 10:3). Therefore it is assumed that both the salvation narrative and Esther depict the great reversal through salvific events. The call narrative type-scene has the literary position to initiate the reversal. After a certain leader is commissioned, the salvific events follow it and eventually a great victory is achieved. For example, the Exodus is initiated by the call of Moses. In the Gideon narrative of Judges, the military victory of Israel is also brought after the call of Gideon. And as I have mentioned already, the call of Samuel opens the widespread prophetic activity in Israel. In the scroll of Esther, we will also see that Esther fundamentally changes through the call and her change extends to the great change of diaspora Jews.

Now, I will observe the peculiarities of Esther's change throughout the scroll. In Esth. 2:7, 8 and 17, Esther's "passive life" is elaborately depicted. In 2:7 Esther is introduced as the adopted daughter of Mordecai (v.7).<sup>143</sup> And she is taken into a harem under the supervision of Hegai (v.8). It seems that Esther is not considered as the main protagonist here, because she is very partially included in the introduction of Mordechai. Moreover, it does not show any impression of Esther's peculiar characteristic.<sup>144</sup> In this manner, Esther is pictured as a secondary and passive figure. Even after Esther became the wife of Ahasuerus (v.17),<sup>145</sup> it seems that the protagonist of the plot is still Mordecai. Grossman argues that important plots of Esther are developing in the "wake of Mordecai's action."<sup>146</sup> Esther's passivity and Mordecai's activity are also frequently found in other passages. When Mordecai uncovered the evil plot to assassinate Ahasuerus, Esther delivers the messages of Mordecai to the king (2:22). Esther's role is pictured as a subordinate of Mordecai. Mordecai *manipulated* Esther, because

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<sup>143</sup> For the detailed discussions of the particular relationship between Mordecai and Esther see the following literatures. Berlin, *Esther*, 26; Grossman, *Esther the Outer Narrative and the Hidden Reading*, 66–67; Levenson, *Esther*, 58.

<sup>144</sup> Michael V. Fox, *Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), 30.

<sup>145</sup> E. Greenstein and J. Berman do not prefer to translate מלכה as "queen", because Esther actually does not have the authority of the queen. They thus suggest the term "queen's wife" stressing Esther's subservient to the king. Joshua A. Berman, "Hadassah Bat Abihail: The Evolution from Object to Subject in the Character of Esther," *JBL* 120, no. 4 (2001): 650. n.14.

<sup>146</sup> Grossman, *Esther the Outer Narrative and the Hidden Reading*, 28–29.

she would be “a reliable source of information for king.”<sup>147</sup> In any case, it is important to acknowledge that Esther remains as an obedient daughter of Mordecai (2:20).<sup>148</sup>

In this respect, several scholars emphasize the negative characteristics of Esther. They point out Esther’s weak and passive feature.<sup>149</sup> However, it has to be acknowledged that Esther is not a stereotypic figure in the scroll. If we just focus on one side of Esther’s various characteristics, we cannot fully understand the whole of the plots. Many scholars correctly mention that the reversal is crucial element of Esther.<sup>150</sup> Therefore, the characteristics of the protagonists also ought to be understood within the structure of the reversal.

Contrary to the notions of the negative picture of Esther, M. Fox notes the “change” of Esther. Fox convincingly argues that the plots of Esther present the transformation of Esther’s character, “from the passivity into activity and finally into authority.”<sup>151</sup> Fox particularly focuses on the radical change of Esther in 4:16. He tells that “Esther behaves as Mordecai’s equal and as a leader of the community.”<sup>152</sup> Grossmann also points out that “Esther takes the reins of the narrative and becomes its protagonist” in this verse.<sup>153</sup> Esther was a passive and obedient figure, but now she has an active role in saving the Jews from desperate circumstances. She does not just follow the commandment of Mordecai anymore; rather, she gives her own authentic commandment to Mordecai. Thus, in this verse, the protagonist

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<sup>147</sup> Berlin, *Esther*, 32; Fox, *Character and Ideology in the Scroll of Esther*, 40; Levenson, *Esther*, 64.

<sup>148</sup> This relationship between Esther and Mordecai is very important to understand Esth. 4 as the call narrative and this will be more discussed below.

<sup>149</sup> For example, B. W. Anderson describes the negative picture of Esther as follows: “The main characters of the book are scarcely models of virtue or piety. Esther, ever advised by her shrewd foster-father, is the beautiful queen who know how to use her charms effectively and does not shrink from exacting a heartless vengeance.” Bernhard W. Anderson, “The Place of the Book of Esther in the Christian Bible,” *JR* 30, no. 1 (1950): 38–39. Also cf. Esther Fuchs, “Status and Role of Female Heroines in the Biblical Narrative,” *MQ* 23, no. 2 (1982): 153–56; Alice L Laffey, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: A Feminist Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 213–16.

<sup>150</sup> Grossman, *Esther the Outer Narrative and the Hidden Reading*, 13; Melissa A. Jackson, *Comedy and Feminist Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible: A Subversive Collaboration*, 1st ed., Oxford theological monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 206–207; David J. A. Clines, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther: Based on the Revised Standard Version* (Grand Rapids; London: Eerdmans ; Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1984), 268–69.

<sup>151</sup> Fox, *Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther*, 196–205.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>153</sup> Grossman, *Esther the Outer Narrative and the Hidden Reading*, 32.

seems to be changed: from Mordecai to Esther.<sup>154</sup> In other words, we can find the “turning point in Esther’s development” in Esther 4.<sup>155</sup>

Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that the transformation of Esther is related to her ethnic identity.<sup>156</sup> After Esther became the king’s wife, she still kept the secret of her Jewish identity, following the commandment of Mordecai (2:10, 20). She may even have separated herself from her Jewish identity (4:13).<sup>157</sup> However, after she accepts the request of Mordecai, she attempts to identify herself as a real Jew by declaring to participate in fasting with the Jews (4:16).<sup>158</sup> Although fasting is not an exclusive religious custom of the Jews, fasting remarks the Jews’ peculiar identity, distinguished from Persians who always enjoy drinking.<sup>159</sup> Through fasting, Esther tried to separate herself from foreign identity and adhere to the Jewish identity. She eventually saved the Jews from the evil plot of Haman. Therefore it is explicit that the transformation of Esther is related to the remarkable change of the desperate circumstance of Jews at the climax of the scroll. The significant change of the protagonist’s status could be considered as the fundamental characteristic of the call narrative type-scene.

Now that we considered the similarities and overlaps, are there certain particularities in the transformation of Esther? J. Berman focuses on the psychological aspect of Esther’s change. Based on

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<sup>154</sup> Carol M Bechtel, *Esther* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 50.

<sup>155</sup> Sandra Beth Berg, *The Book of Esther: Motifs, Themes, and Structure* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1979), 110; Fox, *Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther*, 66.

<sup>156</sup> Because, in the scroll, there is no reference to G-d, several scholars assume that the matter of identity is understood in the sense of “ethnic” rather than “religious.” Cf. Carey A. Moore, *Esther*, vol. 10, AB (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1971), xxii; Berlin, *Esther*, xxxv.

<sup>157</sup> It seems that Moses similarly shows the struggle of his ethnic identity. Because Moses was raised in the Egyptian palace so long time, his identity would more easily be associated with an Egyptian (Ogden Goelet, “Moses’ Egyptian Name,” *BRev* 19, no. 3 (2003): 12; Manfred Görg, “Mose - Name Und Namensträger: Versuch Einer Historischen Annäherung,” in *Mose* (Stuttgart: KBW, 2000), 17–42.; Jeremy Schipper and Nyasha Junior, “Mosaic Disability and Identity in Exodus 4:10; 6:12,” *BibInt* 16 (2008): 434.). Furthermore, Moses named his son “Gershom” (גרשום), which means “I have been a stranger in a foreign land.” (v.22) It is not explicit whether “a stranger in foreign land” refers to Moses’ status as a “Hebrew in Egypt” or an “Egyptian in Midian.” Junior and Shipper wisely observe that Moses did not actually reveal his identity clearly (Ibid., 439.). This may show Moses’ struggle of his ethnic identity between that of Egyptian and Hebrew. It seems that Moses and Esther commonly present the appointee’s struggle of ethnic identity in a diaspora circumstance.

<sup>158</sup> Grossman, *Esther the Outer Narrative and the Hidden Reading*, 118; Berman, *Narrative Analogy in the Hebrew Bible*, 125; Linda Marie Day, *Esther* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 85.

<sup>159</sup> Drora Oren, “Esther—The Jewish Queen of Persia,” *Nashim*, no. 18 (2009): 153; Anne-Mareike Wetter, “In Unexpected Places : Ritual and Religious Belonging in the Book of Esther,” *JSOT* 36 (2012): 330.

the typology of S. Beauvoir, “Other”, Berman argues that the original passivity of Esther derives from “outgrowth of the patriarchal situation.” Berman explains that “in a strongly patriarchal culture, the woman who wishes to survive has no choice but to accord and accede to Otherness and thereby forgo subjectivity, transcendence, and a will of her own. She must adopt a posture of submissiveness and complicity.”<sup>160</sup> Esther was the *daughter of Abihail*, but now she became totally different “Other” as the *king’s wife*. This otherness of Esther who obeys the king’s law is significantly presented in her refusal to the request of Mordecai in 4:11.<sup>161</sup> In this light, the otherness of Esther is an inevitable condition for her survival. Berman thus argues that the process of Esther’s change cannot be seen as so abrupt and firm.<sup>162</sup> Based on theory of coming-out, Berman notes Esther’s inner struggle for disclosing the Jewish identity to the public. Since the process of coming-out requires an entire alternation of self-concept and relations with others,<sup>163</sup> one’s coming-out cannot be done so abruptly. The situation of Esther would not be so different from the process of coming-out in the classical use of the term. She would have to risk her life in order to disclose her own Jewish identity to the king and to the public. Although Esther’s acceptance of Mordecai’s commandment and her proclamation of the fasting (4:16) may show her remarkably abrupt change, the last words of Esther, “*if I am to perish, I shall perish*” significantly present her deep anxiety of uncertain future and her remaining loyalty to the Persian law. Berman writes that “Resolved to accede to Mordecai, she is torn asunder by her six-year subjugation as the consummate Other, on the one hand, and by her experiment with a nascent sense of subjectivity on the other.”<sup>164</sup> Esth. 4, therefore, shows the “initial stage of her evolution,” rather than her complete transformation.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Berman, “Hadassah Bat Abihail,” 649.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 650–53. The refusal of Esther in 4:11 will be discussed in detail later.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 655. Several scholars emphasize that Esth. 4 reflects the radical change of Esther. See, Fox, *Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther*, 199; Frederic William Bush, *Ruth, Esther*, vol. 9, WBC (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1996), 321.

<sup>163</sup> Gary J. McDonald, “Individual Differences in The Coming Out Process For Gay Men: Implications for Theoretical Models,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 8, no. 1 (1982): 47.

<sup>164</sup> Berman, “Hadassah Bat Abihail,” 655.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 647.

## (2) Relation between the Appointer and the Appointee

The characteristic of the appointer is a very crucial element of the call narrative type-scene. Appointers have an authority to commission appointees to a specific mission. The appointers are also frequently pictured as strong supporters of the appointees. I have presented that there are two types of appointers: divine and human appointers.

In many prophetic and heroic call narrative type-scenes, we can see the existence of divine appointer. For example, Moses and Gideon are called to the salvific mission by the divine appointer. In the prophetic literatures, the prophets commonly experience theophany when they are called. The element of the divine call emphasizes the legitimate and public authority of the appointee. Through the divine call, the appointees are qualified and authorized to execute the imposed mission.<sup>166</sup> Furthermore, the divine call depicts that the appointees' life was radically changed through the mysterious experience of theophany. G. Savran also mentions that the experience of theophany is "prefatory to a major change in the life or the character."<sup>167</sup> It is also important to observe that the imposed mission through the divine call has a religious characteristic. In the missions of Moses and Gideon, the worship of G-d is an important part of their mission (Exod. 3:12; Judg. 6:25-26). Samuel also took on the task to judge the religious corruption of Eli's house, when he was called by G-d (1Sam. 3:14). Undoubtedly, the tasks of the prophets are religious.

The second type of the appointer of the call narrative type-scene is the human appointer. Among the various call narrative type-scenes, Abraham, Deborah and Samuel could be categorized as the human appointers. Their authority is not assumed to be as absolute as G-d's divine authority. Rather, their role is considered as the appointees' *mentor*, who is more experienced and authoritative than the appointees. The human appointers *know* how the appointees have to achieve their missions and give the appointees detailed instructions. These human appointers impose the secular mission (Abraham) or

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<sup>166</sup> For example, Lewin considers that the call narrative of Jeremiah was used in order to declare the public and legitimate authority of prophetic authority of Jeremiah. This assumption is opposed to the other views to recognize the prophetic call narratives as the personal confession. Ellen Davis Lewin, "Arguing for Authority: A Rhetorical Study of Jeremiah 1.4-19 and 20.7-18," *JSOT* 32 (1985): 105-19.

<sup>167</sup> George W. Savran, "Theophany as Type Scene," *Proof* 23, no. 2 (2003): 120.



deliver the appointees the divine message as a G-d's behalf (Deborah, Samuel). Abraham calls his servant in order to solve the problem of finding Isaac's bride (Gen. 24:3-4). Deborah commissioned Barak to military task following the G-d's commandment (Judg. 4:6). Samuel also had the divine words and commissioned Saul to be the political leader of Israel (1Sam. 9:16). Saul shows his charismatic ability (10:11-13) after he was commissioned. It was the achievement of the sign (10:6)<sup>168</sup> and it reflects that the commission of Saul was derived from the divine authority.

These three human appointers (Abraham, Deborah and Samuel) do not show the absolute authority like G-d. Rather, they commonly deliver divine words to the appointees. Their certainty in the success of the mission seems to be derived from their assured belief in G-d. Abraham reminds the divine promise given to him (Gen. 24:7) and Deborah also delivers the commandment of G-d (Judg. 4:6). She even knows exactly what will transpire (v.9). Samuel listens to the divine words when he encountered Saul (1Sam. 9:17). Thus divine authority is indirectly implied by the human appointers' extraordinary status.

Another important aspect of the relation between the appointer and the appointee is found from the fact that the appointees generally exhibit the obedient attitudes towards the appointer. Moses, Gideon, and the prophets all display obedient attitudes towards their appointer, G-d. The appointees also show loyalty to their human appointers. The appointee's obedience towards the appointer is a crucial condition for the successful achievement of their missions. The servant of Abraham, though Rebekah treated him with great respect, he did not forget his position as a servant. He reveals himself as the servant of Abraham and transfers to his master all the benefits (Gen. 24:34-36).<sup>169</sup> When the appointee refuses to obey the appointer's commandments, however, he fails to remain as a successful leader. In the Saul account, the failure of Saul was also caused by stealing the role of the prophet Samuel, Saul's appointer (1Sam. 13:13-14).

In regard to Esther's call narrative type-scene, it is very important to understand the relation between Esther and Mordecai. Actually it is difficult to decide who the real protagonist is.<sup>170</sup> Several

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<sup>168</sup> Ralph W. Klein, *1 Samuel*, WBC 10 (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1983), 92-93.

<sup>169</sup> Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 145.

<sup>170</sup> For the detailed discussions of this matter, see Grossman, *Esther the Outer Narrative and the Hidden Reading*,

scholars argue that Mordecai is the more important protagonist than Esther. Moore argues that “Mordecai supplied the brains while Esther simply followed his directions.”<sup>171</sup> Actually, Esther is pictured very passively in the scroll. She is very obedient to Mordecai and she as Mordecai’s subordinate is always commanded by him. However, Grossmann stresses the multiple stages of the narrative. He argues that the protagonist switches to Esther after she takes on the mission given by Mordecai.<sup>172</sup>

In any case, it seems that it is Mordecai who mainly develops the plots of Esther. Mordecai initiates the tension between the Jews and Haman. When Esther entered a harem, Mordecai gave Esther a specific instruction to hide her own nationality (Esth. 2:10). The instruction of Mordecai is expressed by the verb צווי. Thus it would be better to understand the instruction of Mordecai as *strict commandments*. The verb צווי is frequently used with the subject of high authority, mostly kings or G-d.<sup>173</sup> In Esth. 2:20 we can find the usage of verb צווי along with the fulfillment formula (order-execution of the order).<sup>174</sup> The specific phrase ..... כאשר צוה echoes the general formula of God commanding and humans obeying. In the Bible, we can find numerous occurrences of this formula with the divine subject (141 occurrences in the Bible; e.g. Gen. 7:5, 16; Exod. 7:6, 10; Lev. 8:4, 5. Etc.). This formula is also found in the call of Moses (Exod. 7:6). Therefore Mordecai basically practices a strong authoritative power over Esther. Esther constantly shows her obedience to Mordecai. Her obedience to Mordecai and disobedience of the king’s law are very important thematic elements in Esther.<sup>175</sup> This particular relationship between Esther and Mordecai is preserved even after Esther becomes the king’s wife (Esth. 2:20).

Another important characteristic of Mordecai as the appointer is that he *knows* what is happening in the Persian palace and Jewish communities. The verb ידיע is frequently used with Mordecai and it depicts certain characteristics of Mordecai. When Esther entered the harem, Mordecai

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27–37.

<sup>171</sup> Moore, *Esther*, 10:lii.

<sup>172</sup> Grossman, *Esther the Outer Narrative and the Hidden Reading*, 30–31.

<sup>173</sup> For the detailed list of the usages see G. Liedke, “צוה to Command,” ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, *TLOT* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 1062–1065.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 1603.

<sup>175</sup> Berg, *The Book of Esther*, 73.

tried to *know* the situation of Esther in the harem (2:11). When Mordecai was sitting at the palace gate, he came to *know* the evil plot against the king (v.21). And when Haman made the plot to kill all the Jews in the Persian territories, Mordecai *knew* it (4:1) and requested Esther to save the Jews. Contrary to Mordecai, Esther does *not know* what is exactly happening around her. She just stays inside the harem and does not contact with anyone outside of it. From these observations, we can assume that Mordecai can be recognized as the authoritative appointer of Esther's call narrative type-scene. He wields the authority to command the appointee, and he is knowledgeable of what the appointee does not know and what the appointee has to do.

However, there are specific peculiarities of Esther's call narrative that make it distinct from other call narratives. There is not any direct reference to G-d or divine words in the Masoretic version. I have mentioned that the reference to the divine being could be found even in the call narrative type-scene which depicts a human appointer. Esth. 4:14 is a very important verse for the possibility of the reference to G-d in Esther. Mordecai tells that "if you keep silent in this crisis, relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from another quarter (ממקום אחר) ..." In this verse, the understanding on ממקום אחר is disputable. It could be an indirect reference to the divine providence<sup>176</sup> or to just another human as a source of deliverance.<sup>177</sup>

However, this verse has to be understood based on the author's perspective of G-d. It is debatable whether the seemingly coincidental events of Esther are implying the divine providence. Grossman focuses on the motif of "coincidence" in Esther.<sup>178</sup> The coincidental events are the important

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<sup>176</sup> In Jewish literatures מקום (place) was understood as the allusion to G-d (AT, Josephus, I and II Targums). Following literatures argue that מקום expresses the divine providence in Esther. Moore, *Esther*, 10:50; Grossman, *Esther the Outer Narrative and the Hidden Reading*, 117 n.21; Bechtel, *Esther*, 13, 49; Pröbstle, "Is There a God Behind This Text?"

<sup>177</sup> Many scholars think that the adjective אחר does not fit with the reference to G-d, because it does not reflect another god. And it could be understood that Esther is equivalent to G-d. Esther in one מקום and G-d is מקום אחר. Fox, *Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther*, 63; Bush, *Ruth, Esther*, 9:396; Berg, *The Book of Esther*, 76; Levenson, *Esther*, 81. Day mentions that ממקום אחר may refer to Mordecai, who can do political coup in response to Haman's edict. Day, *Esther*, 85. On the other hand Wiebe suggests that Esth. 4:14 is the rhetorical question which emphasizes that Esther is only source of deliverance. John M. Wiebe, "Esther 4:14: 'Will Relief and Deliverance Arise for the Jews from Another Place?'" *CBQ* 53 (1991): 409–15.

<sup>178</sup> Grossman, *Esther the Outer Narrative and the Hidden Reading*, 233–4. On the other hand, M. Jackson sees the coincidence as the literary characteristic of "farce". Jackson, *Comedy and Feminist Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible*, 200, 203–4.

elements that make the reversal of the story, as we could see in Esth. 6. The scroll of Ruth also expresses G-d's presence by way of coincidence.<sup>179</sup> When Naomi and Ruth arrived to Bethlehem, the narrator writes that “as luck (מקרה) would have it, it was the piece of land belonging to Boaz.” (Ruth 2:3) Hals and Gow also mention that the divine providence is hinted by the vocabulary “luck” (מקרה).<sup>180</sup> In this respect, the divine providence seems to be vaguely implied in Esther by the motif of “coincidence.”

It seems that Ruth and Esther have very similar characteristics. In both of the stories, there is a mentor (Naomi, Boaz) and a mentee (Ruth, Esther). The mentees show a very obedient attitude towards the instructions of their mentors. Like Mordecai, Naomi *commands* (צוּתָה) Ruth to a specific task (Ruth 3:6). While the mentees eventually achieve their mission imposed by the mentors, they both improvise and determine their own way of fulfilling the command of the mentor. Then, why is the divine providence not explicitly shown in either of the two stories? I think that this is due to the ambiguous identity of the main figures. The mentors have a direct relationship with the Israelites and the Jews. On the other hand, in these two narratives, mentees are a Moabite woman (Ruth) or a Jewish woman without concrete Jewish identity (Esther). Therefore it is hard to be sure if they have a doubtless belief in G-d's providence.<sup>181</sup> If they do not have a strong belief in G-d, the reference to G-d's providence is meaningless. This feature could also be considered as a literary strategy locating the reader in the same position as the protagonists of the narrative, who do not have a strong belief in divine providence.<sup>182</sup> By hiding G-d, the author may try to assert that G-d works even through the actions of non-believers and that HE eventually brings profits for HIS people. Through the successful achievement of Esther,

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<sup>179</sup> Bechtel, *Esther*, 13; Grossman, *Esther the Outer Narrative and the Hidden Reading*, 234.

<sup>180</sup> Ronald M. Hals, *The Theology of the Book of Ruth* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 11–12; Murray D Gow, *The Book of Ruth: Its Structure, Theme and Purpose* (Apollos, 1992), 48.

<sup>181</sup> It seems that Ruth does not show the religious characteristic in the entire book. Campbell argues that Ruth's pledge to Naomi in 1:16-17 focuses upon human royalty (Edward F. Campbell, *Ruth*, AB 7 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1975), 80.). And Berlin similarly comments that Ruth simply “adopts the people and God of Naomi.” (Adele Berlin, “Ruth,” in *The HarperCollins Bible Commentary*, ed. James Luther Mays and Joseph Blenkinsopp (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2000), 241.) And we also have to focus on the fact that Ruth is not recognized as a converted “Judean” in Ruth (Mark S. Smith, “‘Your People Shall Be My People’: Family and Covenant in Ruth 1:16-17,” *CBQ* 69 (2007): 257.).

<sup>182</sup> Jean-Daniel Macchi, “Une Héroïne Judéenne à La Cour : Enjeux et Moyens de L'action Héroïque Féminine Selon Le Livre d'Esther,” in *Le Jeune Héros*, ed. J-M. Durand, Thomas Römer, and Michaël Langlois (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2011), 278.

Jews and Mordecai were able to survive. Naomi could preserve her lineage through Ruth's marriage with Boaz (Ruth 4:11-12).<sup>183</sup>

Therefore we can assume that the scroll of Esther reflects divine providence very subtly. If Esth. 4:14 implies divine providence, we can see that Mordecai is referring to the divine providence by very obscure and ambiguous expressions. This fact reveals the peculiar characteristic of Esther's call. While the other call narratives show the divine revelation (Moses, Gideon, prophets) or vivid belief in G-d's help at least (Abraham), we cannot hear the explicit expression of G-d from the mouth of Mordecai. However, it does not deny the fact that Mordecai had a sure belief in G-d's providence. He may feel that he was called by hidden G-d in a critical situation. Thus Mordecai, like other human appointers, tries to guide Esther, utilizing religious implications, though he did not experience the divine revelation. Perhaps the fact that the appointer (Mordecai) is not G-d, and that G-d's intercession is anything but certain, is exactly the point: Esther is greater than other narrative-call protagonists. Other protagonists, such as Moses, Gideon and the prophets could proceed forward with confidence that God was with them. Esther, by contrast, moves forward with her call even though she has no reason to feel assured of her success.

In the call narrative type-scene, the appointer always has the absolute authority and is the source of the appointee's aptitude. In Esther, we can find a similar pattern in the relation between Mordecai and Esther, and I observed that the change of Esther begins to occur after Esth. 4. Therefore the general elements of the call narrative type-scene are found in Esther, though there are certain peculiarities. Hence, I will discuss the various elements of the call narrative type-scene adopted in Esther's call narrative.

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<sup>183</sup> Adele Berlin, "The Historical Novels: Ruth, Esther and Daniel [Hebrew]," in *The Literature of the Hebrew Bible: Introduction and Studies*, ed. Zipora Talshir (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi Press, 2011), 418.

## 2.2. Literary Elements of Call Narrative Type-Scene in Esther's Call Narrative

### (1) National Distress

In Richter's call narrative schema, the depiction of the *national distress* occurs at the beginning of the call narrative. This element appears explicitly in the call narratives of Gideon, Moses and Saul.<sup>184</sup> In these call narratives, *national distress* is presented by the particular vocabulary, "cry" (צע"ק / זע"ק) as follows:<sup>185</sup>

Judg 6: 6 וַיִּדַל יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֵד מִפְּנֵי מִדְּוָן וַיִּזְעַקוּ בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־יְהוָה  
Exod 2: 23 יְהִי בְּיָמֵים הָרַבִּים הֵהֱם וַיָּמָת מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם וַיֹּאנְחוּ בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִרְהַעֲבֹדָה וַיִּזְעַקוּ וַתַּעַל  
שׁוֹעַתָם אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים מִרְהַעֲבֹדָה  
Exod 3: 7 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה רְאֵה רָאָה רָאִיתִי אֶת־עַנְי עַמִּי אֲשֶׁר בְּמִצְרַיִם וְאֶת־צַעֲקָתָם שָׁמַעְתִּי מִפְּנֵי נַגְשָׁיו כִּי יִדְעֹתִי  
אֶת־מִכְאָבָיו  
1Sam 9: 16 כָּעַת מִחַר אֲשַׁלַּח אֵלֶיךָ אִישׁ מֵאַרְצָ בְּנִימָן וּמִשְׁחֹתוֹ לְנָגִיד עַל־עַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהוֹשִׁיעַ אֶת־עַמִּי מִיַּד  
פְּלִשְׁתִּים כִּי רָאִיתִי אֶת־עַמִּי כִּי בָאָה צַעֲקָתוֹ אֵלַי

In these narratives, the cry of the Israelites draws the attention of G-d. G-d eventually responds to the cry of the people. Therefore, in several heroic call narratives, the cry of the people can be assumed to be the direct motivation for G-d's involvement and the call of the savior: G-d listens to the cry of the people and calls the savior in order to save HIS people.

The verb "to cry" frequently occurs with the preposition אֶל<sup>186</sup> which indicates the object of the verb. This usage is well presented in Judges. In the time of distress, the Israelites cry out to "G-d" (Judg 3:9,15; 4:3; 6:6,7; 10:10,12,14). The cries of the oppressed Israelites are one of the formal

<sup>184</sup> Richter, *Die Sogenannten Vorprophetischen Berufungsberichte*, 138–39.

<sup>185</sup> Traditionally these different two forms are considered as the chronological variants. Kutcher suggests that צע"ק is the Early Biblical Hebrew form and זע"ק (Aramaic influence) is the Late Biblical Hebrew Form. Edward Yechezkel Kutcher, *The Language and Linguistic Background of the Isaiah Scroll* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 34. However his assumption is criticized by several scholars who deny the strict division of the time regarding the usage of זע"ק and צע"ק. For the detailed discussion, see Dong-Hyuk. Kim, *Early Biblical Hebrew, Late Biblical Hebrew, and Linguistic Variability a Sociolinguistic Evaluation of the Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2012), 144–150.

<sup>186</sup> Gerhard Hasel, "זע"ק," ed. Gerhard Johannes Botterweck, Helmer. Ringgren, and David E. Green, *TDOT* (Grand Rapids (Mich.); Cambridge: W.B. Eerdmans, 1990), 115.

components of the salvation narratives in Judges. It seems to particularly emphasize that the Israelites showed a great dependence on G-d in a time of distress.<sup>187</sup> In this manner, “cry” could be understood as the people’s direct address to G-d requesting for a savior.<sup>188</sup> In 1Sam 9:16, צעיק can also be understood in a similar manner. The expression צעקתו אלי reflects that the people requested G-d to send them a savior.

However, Exod. 2:23 and 3:7 reflect a different kind of “cry”. In these verses, there is no indication of G-d, when the Israelites cried out. They do not plea directly to G-d. Rather, according to N. Sarna, the cries of the people here express “the feeling of oppressed and the agonized plea of the helpless victim.”<sup>189</sup> Actually they do not know who their G-d is (Exod. 3:13). Although Israelites did not call on G-d, G-d listened to the cries of the people and responded to their cries (2:24-25). Thus, in Exodus, the expression of cry is understood differently from that of Judges and 1Samuel. The fundamental difference is derived from the people’s definite belief in G-d. On the surface of Exodus, G-d’s name was unknown to the Israelites before Moses delivered the words of G-d to the people (3:13). After the people came to realize the existence of G-d, they cry out to HIM in the time of distress (14:10 (ויצקו בני-ישראל אל-יהוה)).

Esther 4 begins with the depiction of the cry of Mordecai who came to know the evil plot of Haman. Since the scroll of Esther mainly depicts the diaspora people who are almost ignorant of the existence of G-d, “cry” of Esther 4 reflects a similar characteristic to that of Exod. 2:23; 3:7. See the following verses.

Esth 4: 1 ומרדכי ידע את-כל-אשר נעשה ויקרע מרדכי את-בגדיו וילבש שק ואפר ויצא בתוך העיר ויצעק  
 זעקה גדלה ומרה

Esth 4: 3 ובכל-מדינה ומדינה מקום אשר דבר-המלך ודתו מגיע אבל גדול ליהודים וצום ובכי ומספד  
 שק ואפר יצע לרבים

In these verses, it is found that Mordecai’s cry (4:1) grew into the communal mourning of Jews (v.3). The great mourning of Mordecai and Jews is expressed by acts of grief, such as fasting, wearing

<sup>187</sup> Amit, *The Book of Judges*, 98.

<sup>188</sup> Susan Niditch, *Judges: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 87.

<sup>189</sup> Sarna, *Exodus*, 15.

sackcloth and putting ashes on the head. These acts might be recognized as a religious appeal for G-d's help.<sup>190</sup> However, it is important to observe that G-d is not mentioned on the surface. It seems that the Jews' cries were due to the feeling of desperation without concrete hope. Grossman also points out the non-religious nuance of Mordecai's cry. Based on the equivalent expressions of Esau's cry (Gen. 27:34 *ויעקה גדלה ומרה*) and Mordecai's cry (Esth. 4:1 *ויעקה גדלה ומרה*), Grossman asserts that "each character reacts in a similar way (crying out loudly and bitterly) upon finding out that his adversary (Haman/Jacob) has prevailed over him."<sup>191</sup> In this respect, Mordecai's cry could be pictured as one of desperate sorrow in a time of distress provoked by his adversary Haman, rather than an appeal to G-d.<sup>192</sup>

In this manner, the characteristic of the cry (*אל יהוה* without *זע"ק*) of Esther 4 is similar to that of Exodus. In these two narratives, since the people are ignorant about the existence of divine being, their unstable destiny is explicitly emphasized. However, the peculiar characteristic of Esther occurs at the next stage.

In other call narratives including Exodus, the cry of the Israelites eventually wins over the mind of G-d. However, a divine response is totally absent in Esther. It seems that Mordecai's cry similarly draws the attention of Esther, the future savior.<sup>193</sup> However, she shows an atypical response. She was "agitated" (v.4 *ותתחלחל*) because of the great mourning of the Jews. Esther's anxious reaction particularly emphasizes the uncertain and vulnerable destiny of the Jews without any expectation for a direct involvement of G-d. Thus, in this way, the great responsibility of Esther is explicitly stressed. It is told that Esther was a weak and agitated woman, but she came to take on the great challenge to save the Jews without any confidence in a successful future.

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<sup>190</sup> Berlin, *Esther*, 45; Moore, *Esther*, 10:47.

<sup>191</sup> Jonathan Grossman, "Dynamic Analogies' in the Book of Esther," *VT* 59, no. 3 (2009): 399. He also denotes that midrashic source also shows the literary allusion between Mordecai and Esau's cry (*Bereishit Rabba*, 67,4): "When Esau heard his father's words, he cried out. When was he punished for this? In Shushan, the capital, as it is written: He cried out with a loud and bitter cry."

<sup>192</sup> Berlin, *Esther*, 45.

<sup>193</sup> Levenson, *Esther*, 78.



## (2) Appointee's Suitability for Mission (Initial Fitness)

With regard to the characteristics of the appointee of the call narrative type-scene, *appointee's suitability for the mission* is sometimes elaborately depicted. The positive and heroic characteristic of the appointee is frequently presented before the call. The positive characteristics of the appointee strengthen the validity of their selection. There are various ways of depicting the *suitability for mission* for the extraordinary leaders: the extraordinary birth (Moses, Samson, Samuel and Jeremiah), the positive personal traits (Moses' compassion to the Hebrews, Gideon's bravery, Saul's good-looks) and so on.<sup>194</sup>

How then, are the positive characteristics of Esther pictured? We ought to keep in mind that the *appointee's suitability* is related to the imposed mission. What could be the important suitability of Esther for the mission of saving the Jews? I assume that her status as the king's wife would be a crucial suitability for the mission. As the king's wife, only Esther could approach the king, though there was a certain legal barrier. And it is also important to observe the inner traits of Esther, which made her the king's wife. We will see that Esther's great "passivity" made the king choose her. However, her passivity was not the decisive factors of her success in her fundamental mission. Indeed, her "passivity" was even a great hindrance in conducting the imposed mission. We will recognize that, through her decision to have an "active personality" for the salvation of Jews (Esth. 4:16), her imposed mission was able to be accomplished. In this respect, we ought to focus on the "evolution" of the *suitability of Esther for the mission*.

In the section that introduces Esther, her beauty is explicitly emphasized (2:7 וְהַנְּעִרָה יִפְתִּיחֵאֵר (וְטוֹבֵת מְרֻאָה)). The expression of physical beauty (טבת-מראה) has various semantic ranges according to its narrative contexts.<sup>195</sup> The attribution of good looks is frequently presented as a characteristic of a hero/heroine in the Bible.<sup>196</sup> In the call narrative of Saul, the physical superiority of Saul (1Sam 9:2) is

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<sup>194</sup> Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narratives*, 54.

<sup>195</sup> The important feature for the leader (1Sam 9:2; 16:12); women's beauty (Gen 12:11; 24:16; 26:7; 29:17; 39:6; 2Sam 11:2; 14:27); weakness – woman-like beauty (1Sam 17:42); For the elaborate study on יפה in the Bible, see Stuart Macwilliam, "Ideologies of Male Beauty and the Hebrew Bible," *BibInt* 17, no. 3 (2009): 265–87.

<sup>196</sup> Joseph (Gen 39:6), David (1Sam 16:12), Esther (Esth 2:7), the infant Moses (Exod 2:2); P. Kyle McCarter, *I*

strongly related to his commission to the first king of Israel.<sup>197</sup> It seems to be true that the beauty of a person is frequently related to the future selection.<sup>198</sup>

Indeed, the extraordinary appearance is pictured as one of the important traits and it sometimes functions as an important role in the achievement of the mission. However, we have to assume that the physical appearance by itself is *not* always the decisive trait for the accomplishment of the mission.<sup>199</sup> In other words, one's beauty may at times pave the way to successful achievement, but this trait has to be supplemented by other qualities. This feature is well presented in the narrative of Saul and David. Both of them are depicted as good-looking heroes, but the biblical narrative ultimately gives priority to one's inner characteristics than to the outward ones. This is explicitly emphasized when David was selected and anointed by Samuel (1Sam. 16:6-7).<sup>200</sup> We will also see the importance of inner traits through the characteristics of Esther.

When the description of physical beauty is related to women's, it frequently means the "sexual desire in the onlooker."<sup>201</sup> Fox comments that the king's love depicted in 2:17 expresses his "pride of possession plus sexual arousal."<sup>202</sup> However, A. Berlin argues that the love of Ahasuerus towards Esther (2:16) could be considered as an "admiration," not just as a sexual desire. Berlin points out that the verb *אהיב* is parallel to *ותשא-חן וחסד* in Esth. 2:17. The latter phrase is equivalent to the non-sexual admiration expressed by Hegai and other virgins (v.15).<sup>203</sup> According to Berlin's assumption, the beauty of Esther could be distinguished from the mere physical beauty of women. The notion of Esther's beauty also includes her inner traits, and her beauty was one of important traits of Esther that

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*Samuel*, AB 8 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1980), 173.

<sup>197</sup> David. Jobling, *1 Samuel* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1998), 67; Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narratives*, 54.

<sup>198</sup> Cf. Rachel (Gen. 29:17), Joseph (Gen. 39:6), Abigail (1Sam. 25:3); Jonathan Jacobs, "Characterizing Esther from the Outset: The Contribution of the Story in Esther 2:1-20," *JHebS* 8 (2008): 6–7.

<sup>199</sup> See the narrative of Moses. In his birth account his beauty is explicitly stressed (2:2 *פִּי-טוֹב הוּא*). Although, it seems that his beauty saved his life, it is much not related to his future mission.

<sup>200</sup> Steven L. McKenzie, "Yahweh Was with Him," in *Le Jeune Héros*, ed. J-M. Durand, Thomas Römer, and Michaël Langlois (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2011), 155.

<sup>201</sup> Macwilliam, "Ideologies of Male Beauty and the Hebrew Bible," 267.

<sup>202</sup> Fox, *Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther*, 37–38.

<sup>203</sup> Berlin, *Esther*, 29. For the particular traits of Esther see, Grossman, *Esther the Outer Narrative and the Hidden Reading*, 65.

promoted her to be the king's wife.<sup>204</sup> Furthermore, the beauty of Esther allowed her to survive, even when she violated the king's law (5:2).<sup>205</sup>

In the scroll of Esther, the expression of favor towards Esther is repeated with variations. In 2:9, the favor of Hegai is expressed as follows: וְתִיטֵב הַנְּעִרָה בְּעֵינָיו וְתִשָּׂא חֶסֶד לְפָנָיו First of all, in this context, the idiom טִיב בְּעֵינָיו means the “judgement of the ruler on the personal's suitability for a goal.”<sup>206</sup> The same idiom also occurs in 2:4. In 2:2-4, the servant of Ahasuerus gives the advice to select a new wife, who is “someone good in the king's eyes” (v.4 תִּיטֵב בְּעֵינֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ). This would not refer just to a woman's physical beauty, because Ahasuerus might want a wife who had more than the physical beauty. Vashti was expelled due to her disobedience against the king's order. Thus Ahasuerus would want to take a wife who has both traits, worthy of obedience (inner characteristic) and beauty (outward characteristic).<sup>207</sup> In this light, it is understood why the author used the word טִיב instead of יָפָה מְרָאָה or יָפָה/ת תָּאָר which stress physical beauty in other contexts (cf. Gen 29:17; 39:7; 1Sam. 25:3). Thus v.9 can be understood that “Hegai saw the Esther's *inner and outward* suitability for the king's wife.”

Moreover, Esther “gains” (נִשְׂיָא) the kindness (חֶסֶד) of Hegai. The form of נִשְׂיָא חֶסֶד לְפָנָיו is synonymous with the more usual idiom מִצִּיָּא חֶן בְּעֵינָיו. Fox distinguishes the nuance of נִשְׂיָא (to gain) from מִצִּיָּא (to find) as follows: “Gaining kindness is something she is doing, rather than something being *done to* her. Thus she has some social skills, and not only good looks.”<sup>208</sup> The interpretation of Fox also emphasizes that the narrator does not only reveal the physical beauty of Esther. The narrator expresses the inner traits of Esther distinguished from other women in the following verses (vv.12-15). In vv.12-13, the process of the treatment of the girls is particularly depicted. In v.13, the phrase כָּל-אִשָּׁר לָהּ תִּתֵּן suggests that the other girls “took advantage of the full range of possibilities at their

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<sup>204</sup> Berlin, *Esther*, 26.; Susan Niditch, “Esther: Folklore, Wisdom, Feminism and Authority,” in *Underdogs and Tricksters: A Prelude to Biblical Folklore* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Press, 1987), 135.

<sup>205</sup> Macchi, “Une Héroïne Judéenne à La Cour,” 281.

<sup>206</sup> H. J. Stoebe, “טִיבָּ טִיבָּ Good,” ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, *TLOT* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 490.

<sup>207</sup> Berlin, *Esther*, 23.

<sup>208</sup> Fox, *Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther*, 31.

disposal.”<sup>209</sup> However, the narrator elaborately shows the passivity of Esther by describing how Esther did not ask anything for her treatment (2:15 *לא בקשה דבר*). The passivity of Esther would be recognized as her special inner trait by Hegai and Ahasuerus, because it was an important trait which Vashti did not have. Berman explains about Esther’s passivity based on Beauvoir’s typology of the “Other.” In the patriarchal society, women had to be an “object” (Otherness). Esther also “submit – in mind and in temperament – to becoming an object.”<sup>210</sup> Her attitude was her capacity to “model herself in others’ dreams”, which is not shown in Vashti.<sup>211</sup> And the passivity of Esther is also exhibited by her obedience to Mordecai.

This passive characteristic of Esther made her a more valuable candidate for the king’s wife. Now her goodness is favored by all who saw her. This is expressed by another varied expression: *ותהי אסתה נשאת חן בעיני כל-ראיה* (v.15). Esther gained the favor (*חסד*) of Hegai and now she gains the admiration (*חן*) of all who saw her. In this context, *חסד* and *חן* seem to have similar semantic value as “favor / admiration towards someone”.<sup>212</sup> Esther’s passive and modest treatment made her more charming than other girls in the harem. Her extraordinary charm is seen by all, perhaps including even the royal servants (2:2 *נערי-המלך*) who gave the king an advice to select a new wife. It seems that the narrator intends to emphasize that the physical beauty was not the only reason why Esther was favored. Everyone was impressed by her special quality (v.15).<sup>213</sup>

Her particular favor is more dramatically expressed, when the king saw her. In v.16 the annals is presented: *בחדש העשירי הוא חדש טבת בשנת-שבע למלכותו*. It has been four years since the king’s decree was declared (cf. 1:3). Although Ahasuerus saw numerous beautiful girls, he could not select a wife for all those long years. However, when Ahasuerus saw Esther, the king fell in love with her at first sight. This situation is deliberately depicted as follows (v.17):

<i>ותשא-חן וחסד</i> לפיניו מכל-הבתולים	<i>ויאהב</i> המלך את-אסתה מכל-הנשים
<i>וימליכה</i> תחת ושת	<i>וישם</i> כתר-מלכות בראשה

<sup>209</sup> Grossman, *Esther the Outer Narrative and the Hidden Reading*.

<sup>210</sup> Berman, “Hadassah Bat Abihail,” 650.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 651.

<sup>212</sup> S. Bendor, “Meaning and Provenance of Biblical ‘Hesed’ [Hebrew],” *Shnaton* 10 (1986): 51–52.

<sup>213</sup> Jacobs, “Characterizing Esther from the Outset,” 7.

Ahasuerus shows his entire feelings of deep affection.<sup>214</sup> He reveals “love” (ויאבה), “favor and admiration” (ותשא-חן וחסד).<sup>215</sup> The king crowned Esther (וישם כתר-מלכות) and made Esther his wife (וימליכה) without any hesitation. The repeated synonymous expressions are continuously stressing that outward beauty of Esther was not the only reason why she was made the king’s wife. Grossman also correctly mentions that “In light of the narrative’s portrait of the king, his sudden captivation by one of the women surprises the reader and, it seems, wins a point in Esther’s favor. Her modesty and refusal to go overboard with makeup and ointments (v. 15) turned the king’s attention toward her personality and not just her outward beauty.”<sup>216</sup>

The king’s deep affection towards Esther could also be found in 5:1-2, when Esther approached the king without a legal permission. In v.2 the response of the king is presented by the phrase נשאה חן בעיני which expresses the king’s affection towards Esther. Here we can find the great contrast between the king’s attitude towards Vashti and Esther. When Vashti violated the law, the king flamed with anger (1:12). By contrast, the king reveals a great affection towards Esther, though she violated king’s law. The recurrent idiom נשׂא חן בעיני reflects the king’s peculiar attitude towards Esther. At the banquet, the king wanted to see Vashti solely for her physical beauty (v.11 כי-טובת מראה היא). The other traits of Vashti are not presented in the scroll. Grossman, presenting the literary allusion between Esth. 1:11 and Gen. 39:6, mentions that the king wanted to bring Vashti for his sexual desire.<sup>217</sup> Oren argues that

<sup>214</sup> Heinz-Josef Fabry, “חן,” ed. Gerhard Johannes Botterweck, Helmer. Ringgren, and David E. Green, *TDOT* (Grand Rapids (Mich.); Cambridge: W.B. Eerdmans, 1990), 28.

<sup>215</sup> Cf. Bernard Grossfeld, “מציא חן בעיני: Finding Favor in Someone’s Eyes’: The Treatment of This Biblical Hebrew Idiom in the Ancient Aramaic Versions,” in *Essays in Honour of Martin McNamara* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 57–8. In Esth. 2:17 the doublet of חסד and חן occurs. In the Bible this doublet only appears in Esther. However this combination could be found more frequently in the Aramaic texts (Targums). This may reflect the latter semantic characteristic. Also see. Brian Britt, “Unexpected Attachments: A Literary Approach to the Term Hsd in the Hebrew Bible,” *JSOT* 27 (2003): 301–5. Brit denotes the unexpected usage of חסד. Generally this vocabulary is used in covenant formulas and liturgical texts. However it is sometimes used in the unexpected context. One of these surprising usages is to mark “unexpected attachment between Israelite and foreigner.” This usage could be found in the example of Naomi and Ruth (Ruth 1:8; 2:20; 3:10), spies in Num. 13-14, Josh. 2:1-14; Judg. 1:22-24. In these narratives, חסד marks the surprising attachment between two parties. And the foreigners help the Israelis and achieve the successful mission. In Esther חסד seems to mark the similar meaning. Esther will achieve her mission by the help of the foreign king, Ahasuerus. And this is already implied at the beginning of the story.

<sup>216</sup> Grossman, *Esther the Outer Narrative and the Hidden Reading*, 65.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, 47. Both of Vashti and Joseph were beautiful and handsome (Esth. 1:11; Gen. 39:6). And two characters refused (מא"ג) to follow the order of the authority. Then they were banished from the palace and house (Esth. 1:12;

the beauty of Vashti could be considered as a valuable possession of the king which confirms the king's authority and power.<sup>218</sup> However, the king does not vividly show his sexual desire for Esther. Esther was not called by the king for a long time (Esth. 4:11). Therefore, it is assumed that Esther's physical charm was not the decisive trait as for the king. It is surprising that Ahasuerus did not punish Esther when she violated the law. Rather, the king kindly accepted Esther's sudden visit. How could this happen? Esther's modest and obedient character made the king believe that Esther broke the law because she had really urgent issues. It seems that the king somehow respected Esther's extraordinary inner traits.

It has to be considered then, whether her passivity was the decisive factor in the achievement of her fundamental mission. It would be true that, utilizing her passive and obedient character, she could get an advantageous status to approach the king. However, Esther 4 elaborately depicts that Esther did not attempt to do something for Mordecai and the Jews, though she was aware of their urgent crisis. In this respect, Esther's indefinite passivity functioned as a great barrier for the salvific mission. In reality, Esther was challenged to transform herself into an "active" savior in order to rescue the Jews. Esth. 4:16 describes the great turning point of Esther's transformation, from a passive king's wife into the active heroine. Only after Esther was persuaded by Mordecai and decided to sacrifice herself for the Jews, did she take action for the salvation of the Jews.

The transformation of Esther's personality is also explicitly revealed on the narrative surface. Since chapter 4, Esther begins to "talk" about her own thoughts and "do" what she wants. This is different from the preceding chapters which depict Esther's explicit passivity and complete silence. Her active willingness is particularly presented by her own words with the first person subject "I." This type of sentence begins to occur from chapter 4 and onward.<sup>219</sup> By expressing her own active will, she wins Mordecai and Ahasuerus to follow her plan. Her actions presented in chapter 4 and onward could be understood by her transformed characteristic.

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Gen. 39:8)

<sup>218</sup> Oren, "Esther—The Jewish Queen of Persia," 146.

<sup>219</sup> 4:16 אצום, אבוא, אבדתי אבדתי; 5:4 עשיתי; 5:8 אעשה

Macchi and Calduch-Benages present another trait of Esther as an active heroine. She possesses the ability to deliver speeches.<sup>220</sup> Calduch-Benages also presents several examples which show the rhetorical skill of Esther.<sup>221</sup> She actually seems to avoid making petition directly. At the two banquets she deliberately uses the language of the court and tries to gain the favor of the king.<sup>222</sup> In vv.7-8 Esther responds strangely to the question of the king who tells her that “Even to half the kingdom, it shall be fulfilled.” (2:6) She asks for nothing but the request of invitation to another banquet. Moore mentions that the repetition of the words “wish and request” could be understood as just “Yes.” Then she tells the king, “Yes, I do have a wish and a request.”<sup>223</sup> But she also mentions that “But I will reveal my petition at the following banquet.” By delaying the revealing of her real petition, the dramatic tension grows and makes the king perceive the petition of Esther more seriously.

The lack of pity against her enemies could be one of her traits. Esther requested to punish Haman without any hesitation, and she also asked to add another day for the annihilation of the enemies of the Jews (9:13).<sup>224</sup> This would be related to her “positive self-concept of Jewishness.”<sup>225</sup> At the beginning of the scroll, Esther hid her Jewish identity following the commandment of Mordecai. After the call, however, she returned to her hidden identity and devoted herself to the salvation of the Jews. In this respect, her self-concept of Jewishness was the real weapon in her battle against Haman and the enemies of the Jews.

It is no simple task to conclude what Esther’s traits that led to the successful achievement of her mission are. As I have mentioned, it is assumed that Esther’s traits had actually evolved. While her

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<sup>220</sup> Macchi, “Une Héroïne Judéene à La Cour,” 283.

<sup>221</sup> Nuria Calduch-Benages, “War, Violence and Revenge in the Book of Esther,” *Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook* 2010 (2010): 135–6.

<sup>222</sup> Cf. Esth. 5:4, 8 “if it please the king” (אם-על-המלך-טוב); 5:8; 7:3 “if I have found favor in the sight of the king.” (אם-מצאתי הן בעיני המלך) Linguistically אֵם על המלך טוב is the late form of its equivalent expression in early biblical Hebrew, עַם טוב בעיני המלך. See, Avi Hurvitz, *The Transition Period in Biblical Hebrew [Hebrew]* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1972), 21–22. B. D. Estelle particularly presents the elaborate research on the linguistic analysis of Esther’s “politeness.” Estelle offers the several significant characteristic of Esther’s politeness strategy: “the use of vocatives and titles”, “the substitution of third person forms for second and first person”, and “the employment of the indefinite agent in passive(-like) constructions. See Bryan D. Estelle, “Esther’s Strategies of Becoming an עבד משכיל,” *HS* 53 (2012): 61–88.

<sup>223</sup> Moore, *Esther*, 10:57.

<sup>224</sup> Macchi, “Une Héroïne Judéene à La Cour,” 283.

<sup>225</sup> Berman, “Hadassah Bat Abihail,” 668.

passivity and charm made her the king's wife, her activity and sympathy to the Jews made her their savior. The transformation of Esther's personality could be presented as follows:

	Personality	Identity	Concern
King's Wife	Passivity	Ambiguous	Her Own Safety
Savior	Activity	Jew	Sympathy to Jews

The evolution of Esther's personality may divulge the challenges and struggle of diaspora Jews in foreign circumstances. In order to protect the vulnerable diaspora community, a strong political status of the Jews was required. However, in order to have a certain political status, the Jewish identity sometimes had to be concealed. Esther could be the king's wife because she did not reveal her Jewish identity, and her royal status was an important resource for the salvation of the Jews. In other words, a certain level of compromise was indispensable for gaining an advantageous status. However, it is explicitly emphasized that at a time of crisis, an explicit Jewish identity and the decision of self-sacrifice on behalf of the Jewish community are required. The transformation into an active personality is obviously emphasized in Esther's call.

### (3) Ordinary Life before the Call (Unexpected Call and Initial Error)

U. Simon points out that the initial fitness of the heroic figure is counterbalanced by the *initial error*: The selected ones did not anticipate their election at all. The element of *initial error* reflects that the call was entirely "unexpected" by the appointees. The element of *unexpected call* was also presented by Shalom-Guy as the element of "unexpected revelation".<sup>226</sup> When the appointees were called, they were living ordinary lives. The motif of *Ordinary Life before the Call* is well presented in several call narratives. Gideon was threshing wheat in the wine press, being ignorant of the visit of the divine messenger (Judg. 6:11). Moses was herding Jethro's sheep in the desert, before he experienced the

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<sup>226</sup> Shalom-Guy, "The Call Narratives of Gideon and Moses: Literary Convention or More?," 10.



divine presence at the burning bush (Exod. 3:1-2). Saul was called while he went out looking for his father's asses (1Sam. 9:3-19).<sup>227</sup>

The unexpectedness of the call in their ordinary lives made the appointees fail to recognize their fate and mission. Simon refers to several biblical accounts reflecting the motif of *initial error*. Moses did not realize the presence of divine being when he saw the burning bush (Exod. 3:3-5). Gideon also failed to recognize the divine messenger. Gideon called the divine messenger "my lord" (יְהוָה Judg. 6:13) rather than "my Lord." (יְהוָה) Saul did not become aware of the identity of Samuel when he met him. Saul asked, "Where is the house of seer?" (1Sam 9:18) The young Samuel also failed to identify the divine voice (1Sam 3:4-9).<sup>228</sup>

This specific element of the call narrative type-scene reflects a certain aspect regarding the purpose of the call. One of the fundamental purposes of the call is to make the appointees realize their future mission yet unknown to them. The ignorance of the appointee shows that the selected one was originally unrelated to the specific mission. They had been living just ordinary lives but were suddenly called to unexpected tasks. Through the unexpected call, they began to embrace a totally changed life. The ignorance of the appointee also emphasizes the abrupt change of the appointee's status.<sup>229</sup>

In the scroll of Esther, Esther's *unexpected call* and her *initial error* seem to be related to the problem of her identity. Esther had been living an entirely separated life from the Jews, and did not have any sympathy for the diaspora Jews. Living in a harem, she communicated with no one other than Mordecai. It seems that Esther had no interest in the life of the diaspora Jews. When Mordecai expressed a great sorrow by wearing sackcloth, therefore, Esther reveals her ignorance of the Jews' severe crisis. Her *initial error* is well expressed by the fact that Esther "sent clothing for Mordecai to wear." (4:4). Esther was unaware of the king's decree to annihilate the Jews in the Persian provinces. Moreover, she failed to recognize the inner change of Mordecai.<sup>230</sup> This fact reflects the great physical and psychological gap between Mordecai and Esther. Esther is physically isolated inside the Persian palace.

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<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narratives*, 54.

<sup>229</sup> This is also discussed by N. Habel. However he integrated this category into the divine confrontation. Habel, "The Form and Significance of the Call Narratives," 298.

<sup>230</sup> Grossman, *Esther the Outer Narrative and the Hidden Reading*, 112.

She is also separated psychologically from the Jews and Mordecai. Due to the physical distance between the king's gate and the palace, Esther is not easily influenced by Mordecai.<sup>231</sup> As Berman points out, "Esther is never portrayed outside the palace."<sup>232</sup>

This psychological and physical gaps are also found in the narrative of Moses. When Moses' murder was revealed, Moses fled to the land of Midian (Exod. 2:15). Moses started a new life with his new family there (v.21). The naming of Moses' son, Gershom (v.22 גרשם "I have been a stranger in a foreign land) reflects Moses' ambiguous identity in the foreign land. In the following verse (v.23) the death of Pharaoh who tried to kill Moses is reported. However, Moses was totally ignorant of this fact. He comes to know this only after G-d informs him (4:19). Moses was not interested in "his people" in Egypt. Moreover, in 3:13, Moses expresses G-d as "The G-d of *your* [Israelites'] fathers" (אלהי אבותיכם), not "The G-d of *our* fathers" (אלהי אבותינו). In other words, Moses still seems to have separated himself from the Israelites in Egypt. However, when he decided to return to Egypt in order to save the Israelites, he calls the people of Israel as "my kinsmen" (4:18 אחי). Grossman points out the absence of Zipporah and his sons in this scene. He explains that "In literature, Zipporah represents Moses' early relationship with Midian (Exod. 2:15-22), and perhaps her disappearance relates to his detachment from this identity."<sup>233</sup> Thus Moses' departure from Jethro may reflect the transformation of his identity. He transformed into a "real Israelite", departing from being a Midianite. In the call narrative of Moses, G-d as the appointer recovers the missing relation between Moses and the Israelites.

Similarly, Esther was separated from her original Jewish identity. Although she was introduced as the "daughter of Abihail" when she entered the harem (Esth. 2:15), she starts a new life as the king's wife (v.17).<sup>234</sup> In the Persian palace, as the king's wife, Esther was separated from the life of the Jews. Thus when Mordecai commanded Esther to save the Jews from the evil plot of Haman, Esther hesitated to violate the king's law (4:11). The mission to save the Jews would have been totally unexpected for

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<sup>231</sup> Kenneth M. Craig, *Reading Esther: A Case for the Literary Carnavalesque* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 75; Day, *Esther*, 78.

<sup>232</sup> Berman, "Hadassah Bat Abihail," 651.

<sup>233</sup> Jonathan Grossman, "The Vanishing Character in Biblical Narrative: The Role of Hathach in Esther 4," *VT* 62, no. 4 (2012): 571.

<sup>234</sup> Berman, "Hadassah Bat Abihail," 650.

Esther, who lived a long time as the king's wife. However, she finally decided to follow Mordecai's commandment to save the Jews.<sup>235</sup> Her decision is presented by her participation in the fasting *with* the Jews (v.16). This religious act presented the reunification of Esther with other Jews, distinguishing her apart from the Persian populace.<sup>236</sup> She eventually returned to her original status as the daughter of Abihail at the end of the narrative, though she still remained as the king's wife (9:29).<sup>237</sup>

Esther's *initial error* is distinctly derived from her ambiguous identity. This feature is also similarly found in Moses' call. The element of ambiguous identity of a selected leader is actually a distinct characteristic, differing from other call narratives which present an appointee with a concrete identity. For example, the appointees such as Samuel, Saul, Gideon and other prophets do not struggle because of the problem of their own identity. Although Ezekiel was located in a foreign setting, he still kept his clear identity as a priest (Ezek. 1:3). In this respect, the *initial error* of Moses and Esther seems to reflect the challenges of the selected leader regarding the matter of his/her ambiguous identity in a diaspora circumstance. However, one discovers that the appointees' struggle of ambiguous identity begins to be solved through the call. Mordecai recovers the relation between the Jews and Esther, and G-d also recovers the missing link between Moses and the Israelites through the call.

After Esther accepted the imposed mission, her life transformed from the daily life of the king's wife into the "martyr for her people" (4:16). However, Esther still remained as the king's wife at the end of the narrative. This ending is a peculiar characteristic distinguished from Moses, who was entirely detached from his Egyptian identity. Esther is identified as the "daughter of Abihail" and "Esther the king's wife." (9:29) This may reflect a peculiar circumstance of the diaspora Jews who had to continue living under a foreign governance.

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<sup>235</sup> Grossman considers that Mordecai's rhetorical question "who knows" (4:14 מִי יוֹדֵעַ) implies the divine providence. Mordecai requires Esther to concern with divine providence, not with the Persian law. Grossman, *Esther the Outer Narrative and the Hidden Reading*, 118.

<sup>236</sup> Wetter, "In Unexpected Places," 330.

<sup>237</sup> Berman, "Hadassah Bat Abihail," 668–9.

#### (4) Personal Address

N. Habel emphasizes the *personal communication* in the call narrative of Gideon as follows: “As ‘word’ it is a personal communication normally introduced by ויאמר. Its function is not merely to arouse the attention of Gideon, but to spell out the specific basis or grounds ... The greeting delineates the peculiar personal relationship between Yahweh and the individual.”<sup>238</sup>

Generally in the call narrative type-scenes, the call is given “personally.” As Habel noted, the personal communication shows the particular relationship between the appointer and the appointee. The appointee’s close relationship with the authoritative appointer would stress the legitimacy of the appointee for the imposed mission. However, in the call of Esther, the call is delivered by the technical mediator, Hathach. It is Hathach, the servant of Esther, who helps the communication between Mordecai and Esther (4:6, 9, 10). Grossman mentions that Hathach is the “vanishing character” who functions to express the physical and psychological gap between Mordecai and Esther. Grossman claims that the minor character sometimes vanishes before the end of the story and the specific literary purpose is achieved through the vanishing.<sup>239</sup> Grossman points out that Hathach disappears in v.12, where the subject Hathach is replaced by just a plural subject (ויגידו).<sup>240</sup> And in the following verses, Mordecai and Esther are conversing “directly” without the intermediation of Hathach (vv.13-16). This change shows the development of intimacy between the two characters.<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> Habel, “The Form and Significance of the Call Narratives,” 298–9.

<sup>239</sup> Grossman, “The Vanishing Character in Biblical Narrative,” 563. Grossman presents the example of another vanishing character, in Gen. 22. In this chapter the servants of Abraham represent the house of Abraham. Thus Abraham’s departure from his servants emphasize to focus solely on Abraham and his son.

<sup>240</sup> Day, *Esther*, 87. Day argues that the plural subject of the verse reflect the existence of other servants belonging to Esther. However her explanation is not so plausible, because there is no mentions in regard to the existence of other servants. And the direct statement of Mordecai in 4:13 is not also understood well based on Day’s assumption. Also cf. Joyce G. Baldwin, *Esther: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1984), 79. Baldwin suggests that the plural subject implies the “inmost convictions of the author and at the reader’s deep sympathy with Esther.” However this explanation seems to be too exaggerated. The plural form of the verb has to be considered as just the impersonal form, which depicts the action without the subject. This will be discussed below.

<sup>241</sup> Grossman, “The Vanishing Character in Biblical Narrative,” 568.

Grossman's assumption seems to be right in terms of the symbolic function of Hathach to stress the existence of a great gap between Mordecai and Esther.<sup>242</sup> However, it is difficult to claim that Hathach "really vanished" from the narrative. Although the explicit notion of Hathach vanished "literally" since v.12, his actual existence is implied by several verbal expressions such as שוי"ב, נגיד. See the following narrative structure of the dialogue between Esther and Mordecai:

#### First Dialogue

5. ותקרא אסתר להתך מסריסי המלך אשר העמיד לפניה
6. ויצא התך אל-מרדכי
7. ויגד-לו מרדכי
8. נתן לא לו להראות אסתר ולהגיד לה
9. ויבוא התך ליגד לאסתר

#### Second Dialogue

10. ותאמר אסתר להתך
- 11-12. ויגידו למרדכי
- 13-14. ויאמר מרדכי להישב אל-אסתר

#### Third Dialogue

- 15-16. ותאמר אסתר להשיב אל-מרדכי

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Each dialogue is initiated by Esther. In the first dialogue, the process of Hathach's delivery of Esther and Mordecai's words is deliberately described. Esther called Hathach and Hathach went to Mordecai; Mordecai spoke to Hathach and gave him the details of the king's decree. Then Hathach came to Esther and told her the words of Mordecai. The first dialogue seems to progress very slow and elaborately. In the second dialogue, we may sense a peculiar nuance distinguished from the first dialogue. Esther again initiated the dialogue. She speaks first to Hathach. Then it was told (ויגידו) to Mordecai, and Mordecai brings back (להשיב) his words to Esther. In vv.11, 13 the impersonal verbs

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<sup>242</sup> Ibid., 565.

ויגידו להשיב, explicitly imply the existence of Hathach, the mediator. Through the omission of a direct reference to Hathach, the second and third dialogues progress more “quickly.” The change of narrative pace may intend to show an “increased tension” between Esther and Mordecai. This narrative strategy subsequently makes the reader concentrate on the dialogues between Esther and Mordecai. In the third dialogue, only Esther’s words are recorded and Mordecai’s “verbal response” is omitted. In the third dialogue, direct references to both Mordecai and Hathach “literarily” vanished. In this scene, Esther seems to be pictured as the solitary one separated from others. She had to decide to take on the role of a savior of the Jews “by herself.”

In other call narratives, the appointer and the appointee are located in the “same space.” Moses is called by G-d directly at the burning bush (Exod. 3:4). And the angel of the Lord sat under the oak tree near Gideon’s work place (Judg. 6:11-12). However, the existence of Hathach between Mordecai and Esther explicitly reflects the physical gap between them. In Esther’s call, Esther was separated from the appointer, Mordecai. Although the call of Esther was delivered “personally”, the existing barrier between Mordecai and Esther stresses the solitude of Esther.

#### (5) Commission and Revealing Unsuitability (Apprehension)

According to U. Simon, the component of *apprehension* is “another facet of the appointee’s doubts which motivate the refusal to accept it.”<sup>243</sup> In the element of *apprehension*, what is expressed is not an explicit refusal, but just the concerns of the appointees. Moses worries about the possibility that the people would not believe him (Exod. 4:1) and he also worries about his inability to talk (Exod. 4:10). Gideon hesitates to take on the mission because his family is small and weak (Judg. 6:15). Similarly, Saul also expresses the humbleness of his family (1Sam. 9:21).

The *apprehension* of the selected one is in actual fact related to the characteristic of the imposed mission. Gideon’s apprehension reflects the military term (“my clan” אלפי) and it emphasizes

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<sup>243</sup> Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narratives*, 54.

the lack of strength as an appropriate response to the words of angel, “go in this might of yours.”<sup>244</sup> In Saul’s call narrative, his apprehension is related to the political power of the tribe for the task of ruling all of Israel. Moses’ refusal is also related to his own mission which delivers the words of G-d.

Y. Amit tells that “the refusal motif stresses the unexpected choice.”<sup>245</sup> The call narratives which include the element of apprehension emphasize the striking inability of the selected leader. It presumes that the completion of the imposed mission will be done by hidden hand of supernatural power, not just through a human ability.

Esther also shows her reluctance to take on a mission in the following verse:

Esth 4: 11  
כְּלַעַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְעַם־מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ יוֹדְעִים אֲשֶׁר כָּל־אִישׁ וְאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר יְבוֹא־אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל־הַחֹצֵר  
הַפְּנִימִית אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יִקְרָא אַחַת דָּתוֹ לְהַמִּית לְבַד מֵאֲשֶׁר יוֹשִׁיט־לוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת־שַׂרְבִּיט הַזֶּהב וְחָיָה וְאֲנִי לֹא  
נִקְרָאתִי לְבוֹא אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ זֶה שְׁלוֹשִׁים יוֹם

The apprehension of Esther is derived from her worry of violating the king’s law (לא-יקרא אחת דתו). In Esther’s apprehension, it is emphasized that there is no exception to the law and thus everyone (כל-איש ואשה) has to obey the king’s law. At the first scene of the Persian royal banquet, the strict law of drinking is described (Esth. 1:8 והשתיה כדת). When Vashti, the queen of Ahasuerus refused to obey the commandment of the king, the king became very angry and consulted the sages who know the “law and precedent” (1:13 כל-יודעי דת ודין). Vashti’s refusal to obey the king’s command is considered as a violation of the king’s law (1:15). These scenes could be understood as one of derision against the Persian king,<sup>246</sup> but it also expresses the very strict law and the great power of the king.<sup>247</sup>

<sup>244</sup> Amit, *The Book of Judges*, 254.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, 253. n.43.

<sup>246</sup> The law of the drinking could be also considered as the author’s intention for the mockery to the Persian king or Persian law devoid of purpose. Fox, *Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther*, 17; Edward L. Greenstein, “A Jewish Reading of Esther,” in *Judaic Perspectives on Ancient Israel*, ed. Jacob Neusner et al. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 227–28; Koller, *Esther in Ancient Jewish Thought*, 58. Grossman comments that “in Ahasuerus’s kingdom, abstainers are rare, and there in a need for a special allowing them not to drink.” Grossman, *Esther the Outer Narrative and the Hidden Reading*, 41.

<sup>247</sup> W. Lee Humphreys, “The Story of Esther & Mordecai,” in *Saga, Legend, Tale, Novella, Fable: Narrative Forms in Old Testament Literature*, ed. George W. Coats (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), 99–101.

After all, the Jews found themselves in a crisis because Mordecai was accused by other servants of the king who insisted that Mordecai disobeyed the king's commandment (3:3).

The problem of Esther in taking on the mission is related to this legal matter. Esther has to violate the law in order to conduct the mission. She also worries about her vulnerable status as the king's wife. She has not been called to the king for thirty days. This fact reflects that Esther is neglected by the king.<sup>248</sup> It seems that Esther considers her own value to be less than the former king's wife, Vashti. For violating the king's law, Vashti just lost her position as the king's wife. However, Esther is afraid that she will be given the death penalty like lay people.<sup>249</sup> In this way, Esther's inability to take on the mission is emphasized.

In most other call narratives, the appointees reveal that their apprehension derives from their personal incapacities. Yet Esther's apprehension is derived from her fidelity to the Persian rule and law. This peculiar characteristic of Esther's apprehension elaborately reflects the fact that Esther was entirely separated from her Jewish identity.

#### (6) The mission against the appointees' will

*The mission against the appointees' will* is the fourth element of the call narrative pattern of U. Simon. In several prophetic passages, it is mentioned that the selected prophets take their mission against their will (Jer. 7:16; Isa. 6:11; Amos 3:8; Ezek. 2:8).<sup>250</sup> In these prophetic passages, the prophets are "forced" to take on a mission by the appointer. As I have already discussed above, this element is related to the specific characteristic of the prophet's mission. They had to deliver the divine judgement against their audiences. De Jong explains the characteristic of the prophets as follows:

Commissioned to be Yahweh's mouthpieces of unconditional and total destruction, they stand outside the system; they do not belong to the 'prophet's and priests' that are part of the system. They are not 'diviners pro status quo', but isolated figures, contra society, ordered to speak the word

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<sup>248</sup> Grossman, *Esther the Outer Narrative and the Hidden Reading*, 76.

<sup>249</sup> Grossman sees that this point is "the narrator's subtle criticism of Esther for her assimilation to the norms of the palace." *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>250</sup> Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narratives*, 55.



of Yahweh.<sup>251</sup>

Thus it is understood that the essential element of the prophetic roles is to act differently than what was expected in their own times. They did not accept the mission out of their own desire. This characteristic of the mission differs from the mission of salvation imposed to the heroic appointees.

As U. Simon correctly mentions, the mission against the appointee's will is presented well also in 1Sam 3:17 as follows:

1Sam 3: 17 וַיֹּאמֶר מָה הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֱלֹהִים אֵלַיךָ אֲלֵנִי תִכְחַד מִמֶּנִּי כֹה יַעֲשֶׂה לְךָ אֱלֹהִים וְכֹה יוֹסִיף אִם-  
תִּכְחַד מִמֶּנִּי דְבַר מִכְּלֵה־דְבַר אֲשֶׁר-דִּבֶּר אֱלֹהִים

Eli asks the young Samuel to report the vision, but Samuel was afraid and reluctant to report it (1Sam 3:15), because it was a divine judgement against the house of Eli. In response to Samuel's reluctance, Eli forces him to speak employing words of curse (3:17).<sup>252</sup> Only then does Samuel tell him what he heard in the vision (3:18).

A similar process is also found in Esther's call narrative as follows:

Esth 4: 13 וַיֹּאמֶר מְרֹדֶכַי לְהָשִׁיב אֶל-אֶסְתֵּר אֶל-תְּדַמִּי בְּנַפְשִׁי לְהַמְלִיט בַּיַּת-הַמֶּלֶךְ מִכְּלֵה־יְהוּדִים  
Esth 4: 14 כִּי אִם-הִחַרַּשׁ תִּחְרִישִׁי בְּעַת הַזֹּאת רִוּחַ וְהִצְלָה עַמּוּד לַיהוּדִים מִמִּקּוֹם אַחַר וְאַתָּה וּבֵית-אַבִּיךָ  
תֵּאבְדוּ וּמִי יוֹדֵעַ אִם-לֵעַת כָּזֹאת הִגַּעְתָּ לְמַלְכוּת

In Esth. 4:11, Esther appeals her inability to follow the commandment of Mordecai. The apprehension of Esther was derived from her anxiety of violation against the king's law. In other words, the mission imposed upon Esther required her to break the expected role of the king's wife. She had to break the law of the royal court to approach the king and appeal that the king's decree ordering annihilation of the Jews is "wrong." Like the prophets, she had to go against the Persian rules and customs in order to conduct her mission. Esther eventually accepts the call against her will by way of

<sup>251</sup> Matthijs J. De Jong, "Biblical Prophecy-A Scribal Enterprise. The Old Testament Prophecy of Unconditional Judgement Considered as a Literary Phenomenon," *VT* 61, no. 1 (2011): 66.

<sup>252</sup> כֹּה יַעֲשֶׂה-לְךָ אֱלֹהִים וְכֹה יוֹסִיף is the clause of curse. Cf. Paul Joüon and T Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblio, 1991), §165a.

Mordecai's persuasion. As the prophets who had to tell the people of Israel to change their ways, Esther is now required to tell Ahasuerus to change his ways.

In this respect, we may find Esther's characteristic as that of a prophetess – especially prophets that were sent to change the behavior of the kings. Although Esther's mission was to save the Jews from the evil plot of Haman, she had to fight alone, just like the other prophets. Esther had neither a military army nor any kind of an assistant. She stood alone in front of the king and Haman and accused Haman of his evil plot.

In Esther 4:14, we can find the process of persuasion enacted by Mordecai. Based on the coming-out theory of McDonald, Berman focuses on the words of Mordecai, "who knows, perhaps you have attained to royal position for just such a crisis." McDonald says that "Coming out involves adapting a non-traditional identity, restructuring one's self-concept, reorganizing one's personal sense of history, and altering one's relations with other and with society."<sup>253</sup> Adapting this notion, Berman argues that in v.14 Mordecai urges Esther to restructure her sense of personal history.<sup>254</sup> In response to Mordecai's persuasion, Esther replies to follow the commandment of Mordecai. However, it seems that Esther does not accept the call out of her own desire.<sup>255</sup> Berman emphasizes Esther's repetitive references to the king's law in her response (v.16 לֹא-כִדַּת). He explains the nuance of Esther's words as follows:

It articulates once again her preoccupation with and veneration for the law as endemic of the One, the Essential to whom she has subordinated her existence for so many years. Far from heralding the emergence of a confident heroine, *Esther's last words in this chapter underscore feelings of inner turmoil and dissonance* (my italic) as she commits to plan of action for which she lacks the necessary inner resources.<sup>256</sup>

In this light, the unwillingness of Esther to engage in the mission is explicitly presented. Samuel and Esther commonly show apprehension in taking on their mission. But they are finally persuaded and accept *the mission against their will*.

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<sup>253</sup> McDonald, "Individual Differences in the Coming out Process for Gay Men," 47.

<sup>254</sup> Berman, "Hadassah Bat Abihail," 654.

<sup>255</sup> Berg, *The Book of Esther*, 39; Berman, "Hadassah Bat Abihail," 655.

<sup>256</sup> Berman, "Hadassah Bat Abihail," 655.

## (7) Initial Recognition

The motif of *initial recognition* depicts the recognition of the authenticity of the appointee by others or by oneself, after the commissioning. The *initial recognition* of the consecrated leader is one of the typical elements of the call narrative type-scene. This element is found in several passages of the consecration of a new leader (Josh. 1:16-18; 2Kgs. 2:15).<sup>257</sup> In these passages, the community acknowledges the authenticity of the appointees. In the call narrative of Samuel, Eli acknowledges the authenticity of the words of the Lord delivered to Samuel (1Sam. 3:20). Similarly in the account of Gideon, after Gideon takes on the divine mission, he is recognized as Jerubbaal by the public (Judg. 6:32) and the Israelites follow his new leadership (6:34). On the other hand, most of the prophetic call narratives (Isa. 6:6,8; Jer. 1:9; Ezek. 3:1-3) show that the prophetic authority is revealed only to the prophets themselves. The prophetic authority of the appointees was not known to the public. This characteristic of the prophetic call narrative type-scene attests to the solitary status of the prophets.

The fundamental purpose of the call narrative is to reveal the revolutionary change of the appointees' status. The *initial recognition* element shows that the changed status is recognized by others or by the appointees themselves.

In Esth. 4:16, after Esther accepts the imposed mission, she gives her commandments to Mordecai. Forthwith, the status of Mordecai and Esther is abruptly reversed. In v.17 we can see that Mordecai recognizes the authentic status of Esther and follows her commandment. This changed status of Esther and Mordecai's recognition of the change are seen explicitly in the following verses:

The Authenticity of Mordecai	The Authenticity of Esther
2: 10 לא-הגידה אסתר את-עמה ואת-מולדתה כי מרדכי צוה עליה אשר לא-תגיד 2: 20 אין אסתר מגרת מולדתה ואת-עמה כאשר צוה עליה מרדכי ואת-מאמר מרדכי אסתר עשה כאשר היתה באמנה אתו	4: 17 ויעבר מרדכי ויעש ככל אשר-צוה עליו אסתר

<sup>257</sup> Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narratives*, 55.

In 4:16 Esther commands Mordecai to assemble the Jews and declare the days of fasting. However, fasting was already conducted by Jews, when they heard of their fate of doom (4:1-3). Thus Esther’s proclamation of fasting could be understood as “her solidarity” with other Jews.<sup>258</sup>

On the narrative surface, fasting gives an image contrasted with the banquets described throughout the book. The event of fasting is surrounded by the preceding Persian banquets (1:2-3; 3:1, 15) and the following Jewish banquets (5:1; 7:1; 9:4, 17-18).<sup>259</sup> Each banquet would symbolize the dominant authority. D. Oren claims that the banquet is “the site for exhibition of food and drink as well as of political power and social order.”<sup>260</sup> In particular, she presents the term “intoxicated body” as “a metaphor for digesting and internalizing the ideology of the provider of the drink.”<sup>261</sup> Thus, by displaying the Persian banquets, the dominant “Persian intoxicated body” is elaborately depicted. In this regard, the later Jewish banquets as a “Jewish intoxicated body” imply the dominant power of Esther and the Jews over the Persians. We can see the shift of dominant authority after the fasting. This structure is presented as follows:

Banquet of Persians		Banquet of Jews
Ahasuerus’ ascension and the royal banquet (1:2-3)	→ Fasting of Esther and Jews	Esther’s presence in front of the king and two days of the banquet (5:1; 7:1)
Haman’s promotion and the banquet of Ahasuerus and Haman (3:1,15)		Mordecai’s promotion and the two days of Jews’ banquet (9:4, 17-18)

On the surface, the fasting seems to be the turning point between the two kinds of banquets. Before the fasting of the Jews and Esther, the royal banquets of Persia are depicted, seeming to describe the absolute power of Persia over the Jews. On the other hand, after the fasting, the banquets are hosted by the Jews. The banquets of the Jews reflect the situation of the reversal of power in the scroll. This process explicitly remarks “the move from Persian intoxicated bodies to Jewish fasting bodies to Jewish

<sup>258</sup> Berman, “Hadassah Bat Abihail,” 656.

<sup>259</sup> Fox, *Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther*, 63.

<sup>260</sup> Oren, “Esther—The Jewish Queen of Persia,” 142.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid.

intoxicated bodies.”<sup>262</sup> In this regard, the fast seems to symbolize the process of undoing of the intoxicated Persian bodies.<sup>263</sup> The feast scenes also present the disempowering of influential personages.<sup>264</sup> In the banquet hosted by Ahasuerus, Vashti was disposed because of the king’s anger (Esth. 1:12). Also, in the second banquet of Esther, Haman is stripped of his power due to the king’s anger (7:7). The banquet scene brings one’s downfall as well as one’s elevation, which is the specific structure of the elevation motif in Esther.<sup>265</sup> Thus it is unequivocal that the motif of fasting located between the two different banquet scenes has the crucial function of developing the reversal of the plot.

Returning to the initial point, who then recognizes the fundamental change of Esther? Like many other heroic appointees, it seems that Esther was also *initially recognized* by the public. This may be implied her request to “fast for me” and the obedience of Mordecai (ויעש ככל אשר-צותה עליו) in 4:16-17. Thus it is assumed that if the Jews heard the request of Mordecai, “Fast for Esther!” they would recognize her role and responsibility for the salvation of Jews.

And I think that Esther’s request for the fast reflects her prophetic role. She gave the important commandment to assemble all the Jews (כנוס את-כל-היהודים) in Shushan and to fast (צומו), before she confronted to the king (Esth. 4:16). In Joel, all of the acts of repentance have to be done after all the people are gathered without any exception.<sup>266</sup> When the king’s decree was delivered to the Jews, “many Jews” fasted and mourned, but they did not gather together. Thus Esther exhibits a prophetic role in this scene by commanding the assembly. Esther, however, does not seem to struggle in convincing the public to accept her authority unlike other prophets. As I’ve already mentioned, *initial recognition* of Esther is closer to that of heroic appointees. In this respect, Esther’s greatness and heroic characteristics are more emphasized, though the explicit divine revelation was absent.

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<sup>262</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>263</sup> Wetter, “In Unexpected Places,” 331.

<sup>264</sup> Berg, *The Book of Esther*, 34.

<sup>265</sup> Harald Martin Wahl, “Das Motiv Des ‘Aufstiegs’ in Der Hofgeschichte: Am Beispiel von Joseph, Esther Und Daniel,” *ZAW* 112 (2000): 65–67.

<sup>266</sup> In Mosaic Law, the newlywed men are exempted from the military service (Deut. 20:7; 24:5). However in Joel every groom have to be come out for the solemn assembly (Joel 2:16). Marvin A. Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets, Vol. I*, Berit Olam (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 168.

Furthermore, it could be assumed that Esther may not have fully changed. Agreeing with Beal's assumption, Berman points out that Esther was not actually returned to "fully Jewish" in the scroll of Esther.<sup>267</sup> He supports this notion by presenting different appellations of Mordecai and Esther in the later passages. While Mordecai is called "the Jew", Esther is called "the king's wife" (8:7; 9:29, 31).<sup>268</sup> Furthermore, while Esther's role and activity were always limited to the court and hidden to the public (8:3-6; 9:13), Mordecai's heroic activity and authenticity were recognized by the Jews as well as the Persians (8:15; 9:3-4, 20; 10:2-3).

This observation may imply that Esther was not fully changed and ultimately remained as the king's wife. Therefore, it seems that Esther's change was rather limited compared to the other appointees' great change. However, it has to be noted that Esther explicitly changed from "the king's wife for her own safety" into "the king's wife for the salvation of Jews." Esther's limited change may reflect the peculiar circumstance of the diaspora community where the people hardly expected an establishment of an independent state. The diaspora Jews needed a higher ranked Jewish leader in the foreign court for their permanent safety in the foreign land (e.g. Daniel). Thus Esther's royal status as the king's wife was still crucial for the safety of the Jews.

As I have discussed, Esther's declaration to fast signifies her changed status as the savior of the Jews. This significance may also expand to the further change of the destiny of the Jews in Persia.

#### (8) Evidence (Sign)

N. Habel offers the element of *sign* as the final element of his call narrative form. The sign has the particular function of persuading the appointee who reveals his/her fear and apprehension. For example, Moses and Gideon commonly experience a miraculous divine sign, when they are called (Exod. 3:12; 4:2-9; Judg. 6:17-21). In both of the two narratives, the sign motif occurs after Moses and Gideon reveal apprehension concerning their imposed mission (Exod. 3:11; 4:1; Judg. 6:15).

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<sup>267</sup> Timothy K. Beal, *Esther*, Berit Olam (Liturgical Press, 1999), 100; Berman, "Hadassah Bat Abihail," 662.

<sup>268</sup> Berman, "Hadassah Bat Abihail," 662.

In the call of Moses, there are several references to the sign. Based on the diachronic perspective, Moses' call narrative could be divided by several documents or literary layers. However, I plan to approach the narrative based on a synchronic perspective. The first sign is found in Exod. 3:12. In the preceding verse, Moses has revealed his apprehension and doubt against taking on the mission. Then G-d gives the sign, which will be fulfilled in the future (3:12 וזה לך האות כי אנכי שלחתיך בהוציאך (את העם ממצרים תעבדון את-האלהים על ההר הזה)). According to Habel, the characteristic of this sign is its "delayed fulfillment."<sup>269</sup> This sign of the future will be the evidence to prove that G-d is always with Moses (v.12aα אהיה עמך). Habel thinks that this future sign is equivalent to the goal of Moses' mission.<sup>270</sup> However, it has to be noted that the final goal of Moses' mission is to bring the people of Israel to the Promised Land (3:8), not just to serve G-d in Sinai. Although the people of Israel successfully escape out of Egypt, the circumstance of the wilderness will be another difficult challenge for Moses and the people of Israel. Thus this sign *will* be given for the "conviction" in the final successful mission, the arrival to the Promised Land.

Then what are the immediate tasks of Moses? On the one hand, Moses has to persuade the Israelites to believe the fact that G-d will lead them to the Promised Land (4:13-17). On the other, Moses also has to persuade the Pharaoh to release the Israelites from Egypt (v.18). However, a great difficulty in the mission is also expected (vv.19-20). Thus, he does not stop showing the feeling of anxiety about his immediate tasks (4:1). Moses reveals his apprehension that the people may not believe him and not listen to his words. Responding to Moses' apprehension, G-d gives two miraculous signs (vv.2-7). These new signs are given in order to convince Moses that he will succeed in the immediate tasks. The signs will be shown to the people of Israel and as well as the Pharaoh in near future, but it is also presented to Moses "now." Why does G-d present the miraculous signs at the moment of the call? The miraculous signs in effect strongly persuade the appointee to accept the mission by showing the explicit and visible evidences of divine intervention. Moses himself is convinced by the experience of the miraculous signs.

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<sup>269</sup> Habel, "The Form and Significance of the Call Narratives," 305.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid.

It is important to notice that Moses and Aaron not only delivered the words of G-d, but also showed signs to the Israelites (v.30). Then the people of Israel were convinced by Moses and Aaron (v.31).

In Moses' call, two kinds of signs are given by G-d. This is a very unique characteristic of Moses' call narrative. First, G-d gives the big picture of the mission with the future sign. The future sign seems to reflect that the task of Moses will not be accomplished soon. Although he accomplishes the mission of bringing the people of Israel out of Egypt, he will encounter another challenge in the wilderness. Hence, he may be in need of another sign. The existence of two kinds of signs foreshadows the long and difficult mission of Moses. This characteristic emphasizes the great challenge of Moses as the distinguished leader of Israel, which is also shown explicitly by his repetitive rejections against the will of G-d.<sup>271</sup>

In the call of Gideon, the divine sign has a similar function to the sign depicted in Moses' call narrative. But in this narrative, Gideon himself demands to be shown a sign in order to have the assurance that the appointer is really G-d (Judg. 6:17). Habel mentions that "Gideon does not ask for proof that YHWH will conquer Midian."<sup>272</sup> However, as it is explicitly shown in the preceding verse, the involvement of divine being is the decisive factor in the victory of war (v.16). Therefore Gideon asks for a miraculous sign to have conviction of victory. Gideon also demands divine signs before the first battle (vv.37-40). Although the term sign (אֵימָנוֹת) is not explicitly shown in vv.37-40, the miraculous events have the same function as the divine sign given in vv.17-21. Gideon essentially wants to see the explicit sign in order to have the assurance of the victory. The characteristic of the sign in Gideon's call shows the unique characteristic of Gideon. Whereas Moses refrains from demanding a sign, Gideon asks for a miraculous sign. In vv.37-40, Gideon sets the specific condition for the sign by himself. This attitude of Gideon reflects his ego-centric and skeptical character.<sup>273</sup> Even after the divine call, he

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<sup>271</sup> Amit says that the strong rejection by Moses in the call narrative depicts "Moses' awareness of immense responsibility – the greater mission, the greater the responsibility, and consequently the greater the resistance to it." Amit, *Reading Biblical Narratives*, 67.

<sup>272</sup> Habel, "The Form and Significance of the Call Narratives," 301.

<sup>273</sup> Assis, *Self-Interest or Communal Interest*, 124; L. Juliana M. Claasens, "The Character of God in Judges 6-8: The Gideon Narrative as Theological and Moral Resource," *HBT* 23 (2001): 58–65.



constantly asks for visible sign. Even the dream is an important source of his conviction (7:13-14). This shows the strong desire of Gideon for visible sign.

Also in the call of Saul, the sign has the important function of convincing Saul of his ascension to the kingship. In 1Sam 9:20, Samuel tells that Saul and his ancestral house are desired by Israel (ולמי יבך). In this verse, Samuel implies Saul's ascension to the throne.<sup>274</sup> T. Tsumura also notes that כל-חמדת ישראל refers to the people's desire for a king "like all the nations" in 1Sam. 8:5, 20.<sup>275</sup> Saul reveals his apprehension, that his clan is the smallest tribe of Israel (v.21), though his father is depicted as a strong man (9:1). When Saul reveals his apprehension, Samuel, the appointer, does not show a divine or miraculous sign immediately. Rather, Samuel invites Saul to the chamber and makes Saul sit at the head of thirty guests (vv.22-24). The thirty guests would be the nobles representing the people and Saul's place at the head of them could mean that the nobles were subjugated to him.<sup>276</sup> In this scheme, this could be seen as the political sign to persuade Saul. Although Saul thinks of himself very small, it is found that the nobles are prepared to obey him. This is the explicit sign which shows that the preceding words of Samuel, כל חמדת ישראל is correct.

After Samuel and Saul talked and spent the night on the roof, Samuel delivers the words of G-d (v.27), and personally anoints Saul as the king (10:1). Several scholars suggest that the anointing of Saul could be considered as the secret kingship, contrary to Saul's public election in 10:24.<sup>277</sup> The act of anointing would reflect that G-d also wants to enthrone Saul as the king (10:1 כי-משחך יהוה על-נחלתו לנגיד). After the anointing, Samuel gives Saul a prophecy which will be fulfilled in the future. After a sequence of events, Saul will meet the prophets (נביאים) and speak in ecstasy (vv.2-6). Samuel tells that these things are signs (אתות) showing the divine presence with Saul (v.7 כי האלהים עמך). This prophetic sign has two narrative functions. Here, the prophetic authority of the human appointer (Samuel) is

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<sup>274</sup> Klein, *1 Samuel*, 89.

<sup>275</sup> David Toshio Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2007), 277.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid., 280; Lillian R. Klein, *The Triumph of Irony in the Book of Judges* (Sheffield, England: Almond Press, 1989), 89–90.

<sup>277</sup> Antony F. Campbell, *Of Prophets and Kings: A Late Ninth Century Document (1 Samuel 1-2 Kings 10)* (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1986), 50. And the critical scholars suggest that the duplication of enthronement stories reflect the evidence of the redaction of promonarchical source (ch.9) and anti-monarchical source (ch.10). See Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 80–81.

emphasized through the fulfillment of the prophecy. Also, these signs present that the spirit of G-d is with Saul, the legitimate king of Israel.

In the call narratives of Moses, Gideon and Saul, the sign serves the function of persuasion. In these narratives, signs can be considered as the explicit evidence of the presence of G-d or the successful achievement of the mission. In other words, the sign, as signifying evidence, proves the validity of the commissioning. It effectively relieves the apprehension of the appointee. In the call of Saul, the meeting with thirty nobles has a similar function to a sign, though the term “sign” does not occur here. There could be many other ways to verify the success of the mission. In this respect, the divine or miraculous sign is one of the various kinds of evidences to persuade the appointees. Habel classifies several motifs as the sign, though without explicit term, אֹת. I think that the naming of the sign by Habel ought to be corrected into a broader sense as the motif of *evidence*.

In the call of Barak, Deborah is the human appointer. She is introduced as a prophetess (נביאה) and a judge (היא שפטה ישראל) (Judg. 4:4). When Deborah calls Barak, she delivers the commission by a prophetic oracle (v.6 (הלא צוה יהוה אלהי-ישראל לך)).<sup>278</sup> She also prophesizes that Barak will defeat the enemies (v.7 (ונתתיהו בידך)). However, Barak shows apprehension. He tells that he would go to the battle only if Deborah goes with him (v.8). Responding to Barak, Deborah delivers another oracle that G-d will grant Sisera into the hands of a woman (ביד-אשה ימכר יהוה). Barak does not accept the first divine oracle delivered by Deborah, and just asks for the aid of Deborah without an obedient attitude toward the divine oracle. Thus the oracle changes and Barak cannot capture the commander of the enemy. It is understood that the second oracle was a punishment against Barak’s disobedience. The accomplishment of the second oracle could be recognized as the *evidence* of the actual divine involvement in the battle, because it was no doubt very unusual for a woman to capture the commander of an enemy.<sup>279</sup> Barak insists that he will go to the battle field only if Deborah participates in it, but he will realize that Deborah’s first oracle was not wrong when he sees the actualization of the second oracle and loses the

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<sup>278</sup> Compare to 1Sam. 10:1, in which Samuel delivers the divine commission to Saul in similar way (הלווא כִּי- (משחך יהוה על נחלתו לנגיד).

<sup>279</sup> Tammi J. Schneider, *Judges*, Berit Olam Studies in Hebrew narrative & poetry (Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 1999), 70.

honor of capturing the commander of an enemy (v.22).<sup>280</sup> Furthermore, we can see that the evidence is given by the prophetic form. In this way, the prophetic authority of the appointer is emphasized by its fulfillment as we can also see in the call of Saul.

In Gen. 24, the evidence has very different characteristic compared to the preceding call narratives. As I have presented before, this call narrative reflects a non-revelation setting. The appointer is neither a divine being, nor a prophet who delivers divine words. Moreover, a direct divine involvement is not explicitly depicted here. Therefore the miraculous events or prediction could not be expected. Rather, Abraham as the appointer offers the evidence based on his personal experience in the past. When the servant reveals the possibility of failure (24:5), Abraham expects a success based on his personal experience. Since Abraham was already given the divine promise for the descendants, he believes that G-d will help the servant to achieve the mission (v.7).<sup>281</sup> In the current form of the Bible, Abraham receives numerous divine promises for progeny.<sup>282</sup> Based on the repetitive experiences of his life, Abraham can be sure of the future success.

The element of *evidence* in the call narrative contains various characteristics according to the peculiar characteristic of the appointee. When the appointer is the divine being, the evidence is frequently offered in the form of miraculous signs proving the presence of the divine being. On the other hand, when the appointer is a human, a miraculous sign does not occur. If the human appointer is a prophet who delivers divine words, the evidence is delivered in the form of prediction (or prophecy) and its fulfillment. It also emphasizes the prophetic authority of the appointer (Samuel, Deborah). On the other hand, in a secular setting, the appointer (Abraham) gives the evidence based purely on his own

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<sup>280</sup> As I've already mentioned, this oracle could be assumed as the future sign. Ackermann observed that the future sign could be also found in Exod. 3:12 (Ackerman, "Prophecy and Warfare in Early Israel," 9.). These two passages commonly refer to the specific event which will happen in future in order to validate the divine oracle. Habel characterized the sign depicted in Exod. 3:12 as the "delayed fulfillment." (Habel, "The Form and Significance of the Call Narratives," 305.) Also cf. Michael A. Fishbane, "Exodus 1-4: The Prologue to the Exodus Cycle," in *Exodus*, ed. Harold Bloom, Modern Critical Interpretations (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), 63; Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary On the Book of Exodus [Hebrew]* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1965), 22.

<sup>281</sup> Gordon J Wenham, *Genesis. 16-50*, vol. 2, WBC (Dallas, Tex.: Word Books, 1994), 142; Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis. Chapters 18-50*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2008), 141.

<sup>282</sup> Gen. 12:7; 13:15-16; 15:5; 16:10; 21:12; 22:17

experience and knowledge. However, we can also find that the servant of Abraham asks G-d the specific sign in order to convince in the selection of the bride of Isaac (Gen. 24:12-14). The servant of Isaac found that the sign was eventually fulfilled, though the divine revelation was absent (vv.26-27).

The element of evidence in these narratives has the common function of proving the validity of the imposed mission. In other words, the specific presentation of evidences reflects that the mission imposed to the appointee is not impossible and unreasonable, though it looks like a reckless attempt. Based on the divine sign or human experience, the appointer tries to persuade the appointee. Then, can we find the element of *evidence* in the call of Esther? I assume that the call of Esther lacks the explicit element of *evidence*. This specific characteristic reflects peculiarity of Esther's call distinguished from other call narratives including element of evidence (miraculous sign, fulfillment of prediction and human experience). Mordecai does not offer the explicit evidence or miraculous sign. Rather he tries to "persuade" Esther through the form of "obscure imitation of prediction" and "personal argument."

In Esther, there is no reference to G-d. It seems that Esther does not have the strong belief in G-d in the Masoretic version. Then, how could Mordecai persuade Esther in order to make her convince in the successful achievement of the mission? In Esth. 4:14, Mordecai responds to Esther's apprehension for her mission as follows:

כי אם-החרש תחרישי בעת הזאת // רוח והצלה יעמוד ליהודים ממקום אחר // ואת ובית-אביך תאבדו  
ומי יודע אם-לעת כזאת // הגעת למלכות

Mordecai offers two arguments here. First, he presents the future of Esther's family, which will happen if Esther does not accept the mission. Mordecai warns the desperate fate of Esther which is going to happen to her and her family, if she constantly remains silent. He explicitly emphasizes that Esther and her father's house will be punished for her disobedience.

As I have discussed, the punishment for the rejecting the commission is also found in the call narrative of Barak. In Judg. 4:9, Deborah predicts that Barak will not have the glory. By the achievement of Deborah's second prediction (v.22), the validity of Deborah's mission was fully proved. Barak should have gone to the battle alone in order to take the glory by capturing the commander of the enemy. But he didn't do it and failed to attain the glory. Mordecai tries to offer his argument in a similar way. He

warns that Esther and his father's house will be punished if she remains silent. However Mordecai's prediction is presented by a very obscure wording. Esth. 4:14 could be read as follows: "Relief and deliverance will come to Jews from another quarter, *though it is not sure who will be the savior and how will the relief and deliverance come*; while you and your father's house will perish, *though it is not also sure how you and your father's house will perish. Anyway it will be done.*"<sup>283</sup> The obscure wording of Mordecai reflects his limited status as the human appointer. He is neither the divine being, nor a prophet. He does not have any explicit divine words to deliver to Esther. For Mordecai, everything is obscure and confusing. Therefore it seems that Mordecai just "imitates" the prophetic prediction. In this light, the exact meaning of the difficult expressions, רוח והצלה, ממקום אחר could not be understood properly, because it seems to be only the obscure imitation of the prophetic prediction. Hence, it is assumed that the tone of Mordecai is not threatening, but desperate. Although it might be just an obscure imitation of a prophecy, the form of the prophetic prediction would give a certain authoritative power to Mordecai's words. This was possible, because Mordecai was the authoritative mentor of Esther for a long time even after Esther became the king's wife.

In the call of Barak, responding to the negative response of Barak, Deborah changed the plan of the mission. She did not persuade Barak *again* to go alone to the battle field. She had a sure belief in her prediction, since it was a divine message. On the other hand, in Esth. 4:14 another evidence is presented by Mordecai a second time. This reflects the peculiar characteristic of Mordecai as the human appointer. Since Mordecai could not have a definite belief in his obscure prediction, he had to persuade Esther *again* to accept the commission. Now he again offers another argument. Mordecai would know that there is no one other than Esther who can save the Jews. Then, what could be a convincing argument for the validity of the mission? In the call narrative of Abraham's old servant, Abraham, as a human appointer, offered the argument based on his personal experience in the past (Gen. 24:7a). For the non-charismatic and non-prophetic appointer, the miraculous signs or explicit predictions are not possible. Rather, the argument has to be brought in an earthly form. Mordecai similarly brings the argument in an earthly form that he can use. Although Mordecai does not refer to his personal experience like

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<sup>283</sup> Cf. Michael V. Fox, "The Religion of the Book of Esther," *Judaism* 39, no. 2 (1990): 144–5.

Abraham, Mordecai, as the human appointer, offers the argument based on what he had realized through earlier events. It was Esther's miraculous elevation to the status of king's wife (Esth. 4:14bβ הגעת למלכות).

Why is this fact, then, considered as a plausible argument for the validity of the mission by Mordecai? We now have to consider the fundamental reason for the crisis of the Jews in Esther. Humphreys correctly notes that "the conflict centers on the relative position or rank of two courtiers (3:1-5), for it is the failure of Mordecai to pay proper homage to Haman."<sup>284</sup> Since Mordecai had a lower rank than Haman, he could not access the king directly, Mordecai could not solve the problem himself. Except for the king, it was only the king's wife who had a higher status than Haman. Therefore, Esther's status proves to be the validity of the commission of Esther as the savior of the Jews. Mordecai particularly presents this evidence by a rhetorical question: ומי יודע אם-לעת כזאת הגעת למלכות. Jon. D. Levenson mentions that מי יודע implies the expectation for the hidden G-d's help and involvement in the desperate situation (2Sam. 12:22; Joel 2:14; Jonah 3:9).<sup>285</sup> The omission of an explicit divine existence reflects the obscure and unclear assumption by a human appointer who did not experience a direct divine involvement. In this sense, Mordecai's attitude is distinguished from Abraham who had a firm belief in divine help. Within this rhetorical form, Mordecai connects the present crisis and the earlier events by the prepositional phrase לעת כזאת ("for such a time as this"). Through this connection, the surprising elevation of Esther is interpreted as the providential plan for the redemption of the Jews *now*.<sup>286</sup> However, Mordecai still presents the argument through very obscure wording. This shows that Mordecai may be expecting the providential plan, but is not completely convinced. He simply wants to believe that Esther's elevation is not just a coincidental event.

In Esth. 4:14, the element of evidence is absent and it is substituted by the form of the personal argumentation of Mordecai. His argumentation is not derived from the explicit divine words or prophecy. Rather, it is only dependent upon a faint, personal hope. Mordecai has to try to persuade Esther with arguments that are hard to believe. Therefore the evidence given by Mordecai does not fully persuade

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<sup>284</sup> Humphreys, "A Life-Style for Diaspora," 215.

<sup>285</sup> Levenson, *Esther*, 81.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*

Esther. Even after she hears the arguments of Mordecai, Esther expresses the possibility of failure (v.15). The absence of evidence emphasizes the vulnerable fate of the Jews without an unambiguous expectation for a divine involvement and Esther's great responsibility. It also deliberately stresses that Esther decided to take on the salvific mission, though she did not take an explicit evidence or miraculous sign like the other biblical saviors.

## Conclusion

In this thesis, I have argued that the flexible approach to the recurrent literary pattern offers the intuition to read Esther 4 as the call narrative type-scene. Based on the flexible approach to the literary pattern, I focused on both the typicality and individuality of the text. While the typical pattern of a particular text delivers the general literary characteristic, the individuality of the text offers the specific intent of the author. Typically, the call narrative type-scene emphasizes the fundamental change of the appointee through the commissioning. The appointee's psychological difficulty and challenge in the abrupt change are also depicted by the call narrative type-scene. The literary elements of the call narrative type-scene, however, could be varied according to the peculiar characteristics of each call narrative (characteristic of appointer/appointee, imposed mission and so on). It is important to recognize that the crucial intent of the author is implied in the individuality of the text pattern.

Based on this methodological assumption, I have found that many literary elements of Esther 4 correspond to those of the call narrative type-scene. Esther 4 basically includes the essential elements of the call narrative type-scene. It explicitly contains the "fundamental change" of Esther (appointee). This fundamental change happened through the commissioning to a mission imposed "personally" by her authoritative mentor Mordecai (appointer). She changed from a passive and weak woman into an active and sacrificial Jewish woman for the diaspora Jews. We also find Esther's psychological struggle with her imposed mission and her subsequent change.

However, we can find certain peculiarities of Esther's call within the typical elements of the call narrative type-scene. Esther was commissioned to be the savior of the diaspora Jews, but her isolation from the Jewish community is also explicitly depicted here. Esther had lived as the foreign king's wife in a harem, being apart from other Jews. In other words, she had been separated physically and psychologically from her Jewish identity. In order to survive as the king's wife, she had to hide her own identity and live a long time as "other." When Mordecai commanded Esther to save the Jews, she revealed her apprehension against violating the Persian law. Through the call, however, Esther decided to participate in the community of diaspora Jews. But it seems that Esther was not fully changed into a Jew. Although she decided to become a real Jew, she also remained as the foreign king's wife. Esther's



ambivalent self-identity may reflect the existential struggle of the diaspora Jews between the assertive Jewish identity and a royalty to the foreign political authority.

Moreover, judging by the individual elements of the call narrative type-scene, Esther 4 is clearly like the “heroic call narratives” in the following ways: Similar to other several heroic call narratives, it begins with the element of *national distress*. The description of the severe crisis of the Jews presumes the emergence of a savior. By accepting the request of Mordecai to save the Jews, Esther began to devote herself to the “salvific mission.” We can find the elaborate descriptions of Esther’s individual traits in the scroll. In the scroll we can find both the outer and inner traits of Esther. The depiction of the positive characteristic of figure strengthens the validity of his/her selection and it frequently occurs in the heroic narratives. Indeed, they often stress that the selected hero is an extraordinary individual. However, this positive characteristic of the heroic figure is counterbalanced by *the apprehension of the appointee*. Esther also reveals her inability to conduct the imposed mission. This element elucidates the massive weightiness of the salvific mission. However, the appointee takes on imposed mission through the persuasion of appointer. Esther 4 mostly conveys this sequence.

But Esther 4 seems to differ somewhat from the other heroic call narratives. The motif of “uncertainty” governs Esther 4. At the moment of crisis, the Jews cried out, but there was no clear divine response. The response to the Jew’s cry was only the “agitated feeling” of Esther. This crucial individuality of Esther’s call is marked by the absence of G-d in the scroll. The appointer, Mordecai, was neither a divine being nor a prophet. Thus Esther reveals a strong feeling of apprehension. In other heroic call narratives, the appointee’s apprehension is released by the convincing and miraculous evidences (signs) given by the divine or spiritual appointer. However, Mordecai as a human appointer could not show any miraculous sign or convincing evidences. Mordecai could only offer Esther the obscure prediction and his own argument in order to persuade her. Esther’s unconvincing response (אבדתִי אבדתִי) implies that Mordecai failed to convince Esther efficiently to believe in the success of the mission. This peculiar circumstance of Esther seems to direct our attention to the great weight of Esther’s decision in accepting the imposed mission. Nothing was guaranteed for her mission to succeed and everything was obscure and unpredictable. However, Esther decided to devote herself to the

salvation of the Jews. Esther 4 explicitly emphasizes the great human responsibility in the salvific mission.

In Esther 4, we also find the prophetic characteristic of Esther. The element of *the mission against the appointee's will* implies that she had to go against the Persian rules and customs in order to conduct her mission. As the prophets who had to tell the people of Israel to change their ways, Esther is required to tell Ahasuerus to change his ways. And Esther's first commandment was to assemble Jews and to conduct the Jewish custom, the fasting. This could be seen as the prophetic task of Esther. Although Esther obviously was not called a prophetess, I assume that the prophetic characteristic of Esther is an important part of her salvific mission. In the Persian period, one could not expect a military leadership for the Jews' salvation. Esther was not a military commander who could organize an army. She could only fight with "words of judgement" like the writing prophets. Although her mission was fundamentally a salvific mission, she had to utilize the prophetic way in order to achieve the salvation of the Jews. It also deserves to note that Jews were congregated in order to conduct the Jewish customs according to the prophetic instruction (4:16). But later they assembled to conduct the salvific war against their adversaries (9:2). In this way, the prophetic and salvific tasks are interwoven in the scroll.

Based on these observations, I assume that the character of Esther is depicted based on the preceding biblical saviors and prophets. The Persian periods reflect a new era which lack the prophets and heroic military leaders. By adapting the call narrative type-scene to Esther, therefore, the author intended to show that a commissioned savior and prophet of the diaspora Jews still existed, even when the diaspora Jews could no longer have a definite hope in military victory or prophetic activity.

In the exilic and post-exilic periods, military victory of the Jews could not be expected in either the territories of Israel or the foreign land. Therefore the role of elevated Jews in the foreign court was crucial for the survival of the Jews. Particularly in the diasporic circumstance, it was the better option for the Jews to utilize the foreign political system rather than to fully resist against it. Jeremiah's instruction to be good citizens of the foreign country (Jer. 29:4-7) could be understood in this way.<sup>287</sup> In the post-exilic biblical literatures, we can frequently find important Jewish leaders who were ranked

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<sup>287</sup> Niditch, "Esther: Folklore, Wisdom, Feminism and Authority," 144.

high in the foreign court (e.g. Nehemiah and Daniel). Without a doubt their political influence was a crucial weapon for the survival and victory of the Jews. However, Esther is different from Nehemiah and Daniel in the fact that she was isolated from the Jews. She did not eagerly and actively want to be the savior of the Jews. Rather, she “was changed” through Mordecai’s request. Esther seems to symbolize the highly ranked Jewish leader in the foreign court hiding their Jewish self-identity. The awakening of the hidden Jewish officials of the foreign court was necessary for the survival of diaspora Jews. This could be done only through the concrete decision on their own to be “real Jews.” Thus, through Esther’s call narrative type-scene, the author may be revealing his hope that the hidden Jewish officials of the foreign court would do “coming-out” and dedicate their life to the safety of the Jews. In this respect, Esther could be considered as the ideal Jewish leader who decided to reveal her original identity and sacrifice herself for her own people.<sup>288</sup>

The crucial peculiarities of Esther’s call narrative are “uncertainty” and “hiddenness.” These peculiarities are more evidently emphasized by the absence of G-d in the scroll of Esther. In other call narratives, the appointees come to have a strong conviction by their belief in G-d’s involvement, even when the appointers were human. However, this kind of conviction is totally absent in Esther’s call narrative, because there is no expectation here for a miraculous success by way of the divine involvement. Rather, Esther had to accept the imposed mission based on her own decision and her strong sympathy towards Mordecai and the Jews. As aforementioned, Esther constantly struggled between her ethnic identity and her royalty to the Persian rule. In order to save the Jews, however, she had to abandon her safe self-identity as the king’s wife. Thus it seems that Esther’s challenge and struggle are greater than that of any other appointees. Without any definite conviction in her ethnic identity or the success of the imposed mission, she decided to sacrifice herself for her people.

In this respect, the peculiar characteristics of Esther’s call seem to reflect the actual struggles of the diaspora Jews. The unreligious human appointer (Mordecai) and the appointee with an uncertain ethnic identity (Esther) elaborately present the vulnerable destiny of the diaspora Jews without an

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<sup>288</sup> Cf. Fox, *Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther*, 204–5. M. Fox also similarly points out that “the Scroll is exploring and affirming the potential of human character to rise to the needs of the hour by whatever means and devices the situation demands.”

assured expectation for a visible divine involvement in their existential lives. At the same time, the author of Esther explicitly seems to stress that the salvation still comes to the Jews through the responsible and sacrificial acts of the human leaders. However, we cannot simply conclude that G-d's existence is totally absent and excluded here. In Esther's call narrative, the hope for divine help may be implied by Mordecai's rhetorical question (4:14 מִי יוֹדֵעַ). And the author seems to implicitly refer to the providence of G-d through the coincidental events of the scroll.<sup>289</sup> However, it still seems to be true that the hiddenness stresses the role of human responsibility in shaping history.<sup>290</sup> It also offers the hope that the salvation of the Jews is still available, even when G-d's existence is still in question.<sup>291</sup>

D. M. Carr points out that, in the prophetic literature, particularly in Second Isaiah, the hope is brought by the promise for G-d's intervention in the future.<sup>292</sup> However, as we have observed, the absence of G-d is the crucial characteristic of the call narrative of Esther. The element of the absent G-d presumes the obscure destiny of Esther and the Jews. It explicitly stresses the great determination and responsibility of Esther in taking on her imposed duty. Contrary to the prophetic literature, Esther elaborately presents that the human responsibility for justice will bring the safety and hope to the diaspora Jews.<sup>293</sup> This emphasis is well implied in the call narrative of Esther.

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<sup>289</sup> Grossman, *Esther the Outer Narrative and the Hidden Reading*, 243–4; Clines, *The Esther Scroll*, 153–8.

<sup>290</sup> Berg, *The Book of Esther*, 178–9.

<sup>291</sup> Fox, "The Religion of the Book of Esther," 146.

<sup>292</sup> David M. Carr, "Reading into the Gap: Refractions of Trauma in Israelite Prophecy," in *Interpreting Exile* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 301.

<sup>293</sup> Marvin A. Sweeney, "Absence of G-D and Human Responsibility in the Book of Esther," in *Reading the Hebrew Bible for a New Millennium, Volume 2: Form, Concept, and Theological Perspective*, ed. Wonil Kim, Deborah L. Ellens, and Marvin A. Sweeney (A&C Black, 2001), 270–3.

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האינדיבידואליות של הקדשת אסתר נמצאת במאפיין המיוחד של השולח, מרדכי. מרדכי לא היה ישות אלוהית (השם או מלאך השם) וגם לא היה נביא (שמואל, דבורה). לכן הוא לא היה יכול להראות אותות פלאיות או תחזיות נבואות. מרדכי רק היה יכול להציג לאסתר תחזית מעורפלת וטיעונים כדי לעודד את אסתר. לכן היה קשה מאוד למרדכי לעודד את אסתר לדבוק לשליחותה. באסתר ד', ט"ז, תגובתה של אסתר גילתה ספק גדול (אבדתי אבדתי). העובדה הזאת משקפת שמרדכי נכשל בניסיונו לעודד את אסתר להאמין בהצלחת שליחותה.

אני מניח שהייחודיות של סיפור ההקדשה של אסתר הן "אי-ודאות" ו-"בלבול". הייחודיות הזו מודגשת על ידי היעדרותו של אלוהים מהסיפור. בסיפורי ההקדשה האחרים, השליחים מגלים אמונה חזקה בהצלחתם בהתבסס על אמונתם במעורבות אלוהית, למרות שלפעמים השולח אינו ישות אלוהית. בסיפור ההקדשה של אסתר אמונתה של אסתר בהצלחתה מוטלת בספק ("וכאשר אבדתי אבדתי"). אסתר הייתה צריכה לקחת את השליחות בהתבסס על החלטתה ועל אהדה חזקה למרדכי וליהודים, ואסתר ממשיכה לגלות את הבלבול של הזהות אתנית שלה. למרות זאת אסתר החליטה לעמוד לצד יהודים. לכן נראה שהאתגר והמאבק של אסתר היו יותר גדולים מהשליחים האחרים במקרא. היא החליטה להקריב את עצמה עבור עמה ללא זהות אתנית ברורה וללא אמונה חזקה בהצלחתה. בהקשר זה, המאפיינים הייחודיים של סיפור ההקדשה של אסתר משקפים את המאבקים האמתיים של יהודים בתפוצות. השולח (מרדכי) שלא ראה התגלות אלוהית, והשליח (אסתר) שלא היה לה זהות אתנית ברורה, מציגים את גורלם הפגיע של יהודים בתפוצות. אין להם תקווה ברורה להתערבות אלוהית בחייהם. אבל המחבר גם מדגיש שהצלחתם של יהודים תתממש באמצעות מעשים אחראיים והקרבה של מנהיגים אנושים. אבל אנחנו לא יכולים פשוט לומר שקיומו של אלוהים נעדר לחלוטין במגילת אסתר. בסיפור ההקדשה של אסתר, נראה שהתקווה לעזרה אלוהית משתמעת בתוך השאלה הרטורית של מרדכי (ד', י"ד. "מי יודעי"). והמחבר מתכוון להראות את ההשגחה של אלוהים באמצעות אירועים מקריים. אבל עדיין נראה שהנסתרות של אלוהים מדגישה את התפקיד של אחריות אנושית להישרדות של היהודים. המחבר גם מדגיש את התקווה שההצלה של יהודים תראה קבל עם ועדה, אפילו כשקיומו של אלוהים אינו ברור.

הפרק השני של עבודה מדגיש שאנחנו יכולים לקרוא מגילת אספר פרק ד' לאור סצנת דפוס לסיפור ההקדשה, כשאנחנו ניגשים לסיפור באופן גמיש. במגילת אסתר ד', אנחנו יכולים למצוא את הרכיבים החיוביים של סצנת דפוס לסיפור ההקדשה: השולח הסמכותי (מרדכי), השליח (אסתר) והשינוי של שליח באופן קיצוני (אסתר ד, ט"ז) באמצעות המינויים (פס' י"ד). לכן אסתר ד' מתאר את הקושי הגדול של אסתר בזמן הקדשתה.

אבל המאפיינים הייחודיים בסיפור ההקדשה של אסתר נמצאים באמצעות הרכיבים הנוספים של הסיפור: "תיאור המצוקה", "ההתאמה הראשונית של השליח לשליחות", "חיים רגילים לפני ההקדשה", "נאום פרטי", "תיאורי מינויים" ו-החששות, "שליחות שנכפית על השליח", ו-"ההכרה הראשונה" ו-"ראייה (אות)".

במיוחד נראה שבאסתר ד' כלולים הרכיבים של סצנת דפוס לסיפור ההקדשה לגיבור וגם לנביא ביחד. אני מניח שהאופי של אסתר מוצג בהתבסס על גיבורים ונביאים במקרא שהוקדשו לשליחויות ספציפיות. התקופה הפרסית הייתה התקופה החדשה שכבר לא קיימו נביאים וגיבורים ליהודים. לכן אני חושב שהמחבר התכוון להדגיש שהגיבורה (או נביאה) המוקדשת עדיין קיימה בגלויות, למרות שכבר לא הייתה להם תקווה להתערבות אלוהית ולניצחון צבאי.

בעצם אסתר היא גיבורתם של יהודים בתפוצות. אבל היא ממשיכה לגלות את הבלבול של הזהות האתנית. לפני הקדשתה, אסתר נפרדה מהיהודים והיא הייתה אשתו של המלך הפרסי. במילים אחרות, אסתר נפרדה באופן פיזי ופסיכולוגי מהזהות היהודית. כשמרדכי ציווה על אסתר להציל את היהודים, היא גילתה את החששות להפר את החוק הפרסי. אבל באמצעות ההקדשה, אסתר החליטה לעמוד לצד היהודים. נראה שאסתר עדיין לא חזרה לזהות היהודית באופן מלא. למרות שאסתר החליטה להיות גיבורתם של יהודים, בעצם מעמדה לא השתנה ועד סוף הסיפור היא הייתה אשתו של המלך הפרסי. הבלבול הזהותי של אסתר משקף את המאבק הקיומי של יהודים בתפוצות בין שמירת זהות יהודית ובין תמלוגים לסמכות פוליטית זרה.

אבל גם חייבים לציין שמעמדה המלכותי של אסתר היה התאמה חיובית להקדשתה של אסתר. בעצם אסתר השתמשה במעמדה המלכותי כדי להציל יהודים. נכון שמעמדה מלכותי משקף את בלבולה של זהות אתנית, אבל גם זה היה נשק חזק לניצחון של היהודים.

בתקופת הגלות ולאחריה, יהודים לא היו יכולים לקוות לניצחון צבאי בארץ ישראל וגם לא בארץ זרה. לכן התפקיד של יהודים בחצר המלוכה הזר היה חשוב מאוד להשרדותם. אין ספק שהשפעתם הייתה כמו "נשק" חזק לניצחון של יהודים. אבל אסתר נפרדה מעמה לחלוטין. אולי היא לא רצתה להיות גיבורת היהודים. נראה שאסתר מסמלת מנהיג יהודי בחצר המלוכה הזר ללא זהות יהודית ברורה. התעוררותם של עובדי המדינה היהודיים שהסתירו את זהות יהודית הייתה חיובית למען הישרדות של היהודים. זאת הייתה אפשרות רק באמצעות ההחלטה הקונקרטי שלהם. לכן באמצעות סצנת דפוס לסיפור ההקדשה של אסתר, נראה שהמחבר מגלה תקוותו שעובדי מדינה יהודיים יעשו "יציאת מהארון" ויקדישו חייהם לביטחון של יהודים.

## תקציר

מטרת העבודה זו היא לנתח את מגילת אסתר פרק ד' לאור סצנת דפוס לסיפור ההקדשה ולהתבונן על מאפייניו הצורניים והנושאים.

הפרק הראשון של עבודה עוסק בבחינה המתודולוגית של התהליך העבודה. החוקרים W. Richter ו-N. Habel הם משמעותיים לבחינת סיפור ההקדשה במקרא. למרות זאת, הקריטריונים הצורניים שלהם לדפוס סיפור ההקדשה הם נוקשים מאוד, ונראה שהם איבדו את המאפיינים החיוניים של תבנית סיפור ההקדשה במקרא. בניגוד למתודולוגיה נוקשה, אני מתכוון להשתמש במתודולוגיה גמישה לתבנית ספרותית חוזרת בהתבסס על ההשערה שתבנית ספרותית חוזרת היא התוצאה של "קונבנציה ספרותית". ההשערה המתודולוגית הזאת מתבססת על התאוריה של R. Alter, "סצנת דפוס". במתודולוגיה הזאת, מודגש שרכיבים אינדיבידואליים ורכיבים טיפוסיים מתארים מאפיינים חיוניים של תבנית ספרותית. הרכיבים הטיפוסיים של הסיפור מגלים מאפיין ספרותי כללי, ואילו הרכיבים האינדיבידואליים של הסיפור מגלים את כוונתו המיוחדת של מחבר. הקריטריונים המתודולוגיים של הגישה הזאת לתבנית הספרותית מוצגים כדלהלן:

(1) התבנית הסיפורית החוזרת היא תוצאה של קונבנציה ספרותית.

(2) המחבר מסגל את הקונבנציה הספרותית למטרה הייחודית של סיפורו.

(3) כוונתו של המחבר מוצגת באמצעות האינדיבידואליות של סיפורו.

(4) המושב בחיים של הסיפור נמצא בכוונה הספציפית של המחבר או הסיפור.

בהתבסס על הקריטריונים האלה, ניסיתי לגלות את הטיפוסיות והאינדיבידואליות של סצנת דפוס בסיפור ההקדשה. למטרה זו, אספתי וניתחתי את הרכיבים המגוונים של סיפור ההקדשה שכבר הוצגו על ידי חוקרים רבים. מצאתי את הרכיבים הטיפוסיים של סצנת דפוס לסיפור ההקדשה שנמצאים בכל סיפורי ההקדשה במקרא: "נאום פרטי", "תיאורי מינויים", "עידוד", ו-"ההכרה הראשונית". בהתבסס על הרכיבים הטיפוסיים האלה, סצנת דפוס לסיפור ההקדשה מתכוונת לתאר ש"השולח הסמכותי שולח את השליח לשליחות הייחודית באמצעות העידוד. ומעמדו של השליח משתנה באופן קיצוני". בגלל ש"שינוי" הוא הרכיב המרכזי, בייחוד הקושי הפסיכולוגי של השליח לשינוי זהות מודגש בסיפור ההקדשה. בהקשר זה, הטיפוסיות של סצנת דפוס לסיפור ההקדשה בכלל מדגישה את הקושי והמאבק של שליח בזמן ההקדשה.

הרכיבים האינדיבידואליים משקפים את המאפיינים הייחודיים של סיפור ההקדשה. לפי האינדיבידואליות הספציפית, למשל, המאפיין של השולח, של השליח ושל השליחות, סצנת דפוס לסיפור ההקדשה ממוינת לשלוש סצנות דפוס שונות: "ההקדשה לשגריר", "ההקדשה לגיבור" ו-"ההקדשה לנביא". נמצאים גם הרכיבים הנוספים והם מתארים מאפיינים מיוחדים של כל סיפור ההקדשה. אני מניח שכוונתו של המחבר מתוארת על ידי האינדיבידואליות של התבנית הספרותית.

עבודה זו נעשתה בהדרכתו של די"ר יהושוע ברמן

מן המחלקה תנ"ך ע"ש זלמן שמיר של אוניברסיטת בר-אילן



אוניברסיטת בר-אילן

עבודה שוות ערך תיזה

## ההקדשה של אסתר

קריאת מגילת אסתר ד', א-טז לאור סצנת דפוס לסיפור ההקדשה

קיונגסיק קים

עבודה זו מוגשת כחלק מהדרישות לשם סיום השלמות לתואר שלישי

במחלקה לתנ"ך ע"ש זלמן שמיר של אוניברסיטת בר-אילן