



Re-Examining the Foundations

Author(s): Frederick V. Winnett

Reviewed work(s):

Source: *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 84, No. 1 (Mar., 1965), pp. 1-19

Published by: [The Society of Biblical Literature](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3264068>

Accessed: 10/04/2012 14:10

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



The Society of Biblical Literature is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Journal of Biblical Literature*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

RE-EXAMINING THE FOUNDATIONS*

FREDERICK V. WINNETT

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, TORONTO

THE TITLE of my paper may suggest that I am about to engage in an archeological operation. I do intend to do some digging but in a metaphorical sense only. I propose to dig down and examine the foundations of some of the edifices which have been erected by OT scholars in recent years because I am convinced that these foundations are in bad shape and stand in need of extensive repairs.

We would all be prepared to admit, I believe, that the Pentateuch is the heart of the OT and that the views which we hold regarding it are the foundation on which our approach to the other books largely rests. If we are wrong about the Pentateuch, our interpretation of the rest of the OT literature and our reconstructions of the development of Hebrew religious thought and practice will inevitably be full of flaws. Personally I have become more and more convinced that we have been wrong and that much of what is told us about the Pentateuch in *Introductions to the Old Testament* stands in need of considerable revision. It seemed to me appropriate, therefore, that at the one hundredth meeting of the Society we might well devote some time to a consideration of this fundamental problem. The matter is one of considerable urgency, for there is manifestly no use in continuing to engage in further building operations until any weak spots in the foundation have been repaired.

Since the pentateuchal material is far too extensive to deal with adequately in a single paper, I shall confine most of my remarks to a discussion of the Book of Genesis. There is all the more justification for doing so since the problems which this book presents must first be solved before an attack is launched on the larger problem. My aim will be to demonstrate that the usual view of the literary structure of Genesis is highly questionable and that there is another, simpler and more natural way of accounting for the phenomena which it presents.

THE PRIMEVAL HISTORY

I turn first to an examination of the primeval history in the first eleven chapters of Genesis. Here the biblical student finds himself confronted by two problems: first, the literary structure of the history,

* The Presidential Address delivered at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature on December 28, 1964, at Riverside Church, New York City.

and secondly, its date. Regarding the literary structure two main points of view have emerged. According to one the primeval history is the work of a single J author, except for a number of extensive embellishments by the postexilic editor P. According to the other, the work of two J authors besides P can be detected. Some scholars, notably Budde, Gunkel, Smend, and Eissfeldt, think of the two J sources as being separate documents; Simpson thinks of J2 as a rewriting and expansion of J1; Immanuel Levy thinks of a basic J document which has been expanded by many later hands. The theory of two J sources has not, I believe, commanded general acceptance. Neither von Rad¹ nor Speiser (whom we congratulate on his newly published commentary on Genesis²) even mentions it. The theory has come under suspicion for two reasons: first, because its proponents have not been able to agree among themselves on how the narrative should be divided between the two J's, and secondly because acceptance of the theory involves the dissection and mutilation of stories which have every appearance of being literary units. Thus Gunkel's analysis of the beautiful little legend in 11 1-9 about the building of the city of Babylon into a *Stadtbaurezension* which he attributed to a Je document, and a *Turmsage* which he attributed to a Jj document is contrary both to common sense and to internal evidence.³ Would a tradition about the founding of Babylon make no mention of its most distinctive architectural feature, the great temple tower, *Entemenanki*? As well ask us to believe that a future legend about the building of this great city of New York will make no mention of its famous skyscrapers! It is generally recognized that the various traditions which go to make up the primeval history are not always consistent with one another, but any attempt to resolve the problem by arranging the traditions in two separate sequences raises more problems than it solves. The inconsistency can be, and has been, quite readily accounted for by the assumption that some of the traditions arose in different areas and had no original connection with one another.

The primeval history, even after the P additions have been removed, still gives the impression of being the work of a single, creative mind. The author has selected, adapted and arranged his materials to tell a

¹ *Genesis*, tr. by J. H. Marks, 1961.

² E. A. Speiser, *Genesis* (The Anchor Bible), 1964.

³ H. Gunkel, *Genesis*³, pp. 92-101. This is not to minimize the very important contribution made by Gunkel to our understanding of the stories in Genesis, especially in helping us to see their probable original *Sitz im Leben*. Nevertheless, the fact remains that his theories regarding the literary structure of the various parts of the book need to be viewed with some reserve. The objection to his theory that the Abraham story is composed of two cycles of tradition, one of Hebronite origin (Ja), the other of Beersheba origin (Jb), is that the supposed cycles are not separate units but interdependent. The same objection applies to his theory that the Jacob story is composed of an Esau cycle and a Laban cycle.

continuous story. Each tradition utilized has a definite rôle to play and is essential to the unfolding of the story. Not one of the traditions can be removed without leaving a serious void. Thus there can be no doubt about the literary unity of the J narrative.

The failure of all attempts to break up the J narrative of the primeval history into two literary strands points inescapably to the conclusion that the author derived his material from oral sources or, if he did have any written sources at his command, he has so digested them and recast them that it is no longer possible to recover their original form. Such a conclusion, is, I submit, in accord with the inherent probabilities of the case. An author does not undertake to write a book unless he has something to say (I hope that is true), unless he is "on fire" with an idea. His book, especially at the beginning, is unlikely to be a mere mosaic of quotations from other people's works. He may have derived his materials from various sources, but these materials have fused in his mind into a new creation. That the author of the primeval history was such an author, that he had been gripped by an idea, one which led him to compose the first universal history of which we have record, I shall endeavor to show presently.

It has been recognized for some time that a purely documentary approach to the Pentateuch is not enough. Greater allowance must be made for direct borrowing on an author's part from oral tradition, as Engnell and others have contended. The primeval history is a case in point. We must be on our guard, however, against assuming too readily that because the documentary approach does not work in one case, it will not work in another. There has been far too great a tendency among pentateuchal critics to generalize from a particular case.

I turn now to the question of the date of the primeval history. On this matter there is almost complete unanimity of opinion among scholars. They date it to the middle of the ninth century B.C. There is even a pronounced tendency now to date it a century earlier, to the time of David and Solomon.⁴ Some years ago a distinguished and beloved member of this Society, and its president in the year 1941, Julian Morgenstern, dared to raise his voice in opposition to the majority opinion. In an article on "The Mythological Background of Psalm 82," published in the *Hebrew Union College Annual* for 1939, he wrote as follows: "For many and to me cogent considerations I can not share in the opinion of practically all biblical scholars that the several J strata of Gen. 1-11 must necessarily be pre-exilic by virtue of their being indisputably a part of J." He goes on to date this J material to "the universalistic period of Jewish thought and practice, 516-485 B.C."⁵

⁴ See Artur Weiser, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 108, and Curt Kuhl, *The Old Testament*, p. 72.

⁵ Vol. 14, p. 93, n. 114.

Morgenstern's view thus stands in striking contrast to that of most scholars.

It needs to be pointed out that the early dating advocated by the majority is based not on internal evidence but on an assumption, the assumption that the J author of the primeval history is the same person as the J author of the early parts of the patriarchal narratives. The internal evidence, if taken at its face value, is definitely against this assumption and tends to support the late date which Morgenstern proposed. Thus the references to "Ur of the Chaldeans" in 11 28, 31 must surely point to a date after the rise of the Chaldean empire in the late seventh century B.C., for it is doubtful if a reference to them prior to that time would have had any significance for a Hebrew reader. The list of Japhethite peoples in the table of nations in 10 2-5 points to an even later date, for, judging from the other references to Japhethite peoples in the OT, the Hebrews did not become acquainted with most of them until the time of Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah. The strongest argument for an exilic, or even a postexilic, date is the author's universalistic and monotheistic outlook. He views the universe as the creation of a one and only God, YHWH. In some of the old myths and legends surviving from the past he sees evidence that the original harmony of creation had been upset by the entry of sin into the world, by man's disobedience to the commands of God. Sin to him is not a nationalistic affair, the apostasy of the nation from YHWH, as it was to the eighth-century prophets; it is a universal, human phenomenon. There is an innate tendency to evil in the hearts of all men from their youth. While it is always possible that a writer is far ahead of his time, the testimony of other Hebrew literature to the development of Hebrew religious thought suggests very definitely that either the exilic or the postexilic period provides the most natural *milieu* for the author of the primeval history.

Those who maintain a tenth- or ninth-century B.C. date for the primeval history are compelled to regard as later interpolations, or to assign to P, all evidence which is contrary to their theory — a procedure which is highly questionable, to say the least. One would have thought that proper procedure would require acceptance of a date in line with the internal evidence. The adoption of the other procedure mentioned has led, among other things, to a mutilation of the table of nations in ch. 10, which is a carefully planned composition. It is true that P tampered with this chapter in that he inserted an introductory verse at the beginning and a concluding verse at the end, as well as a summarizing verse at the end of each section (vss. 5, 20, and 31) — additions which were probably made to break up the long lists of names into manageable portions and give the memory a "breathing space" — but there is no indication that P tampered with the lists of names themselves.

Furthermore, J knew of three sons of Noah (cf. 9 18); hence it is highly unlikely that in ch. 10 he gave the descendants of only two of them.

While advocates of an early date may be able to dispose of the embarrassing references to the Japhethites and Chaldeans to their own satisfaction by assigning them to non-J hands, there is one thing which they are unable to account for adequately and that is the universalistic, monotheistic point of view which permeates the whole narrative. It is difficult to believe that Hebrew society produced an author with such an outlook as early as the tenth or ninth century B.C. His profound theology and his subtle adaptation of old myths and legends to serve as vehicles for this theology point to a late date. To judge by what we know from other literary sources about the development of Hebrew religious thought, he can be dated most appropriately about the time of Deutero-Isaiah or a little later. Thus I would align myself with Dr. Morgenstern on the matter of date. I would go even further and voice the conviction that it was in dealing with the authorship and date of the primeval history that pentateuchal criticism first went astray and that we shall never get out of the morass of conflicting opinions in which we now find ourselves until we are willing to go back and revise our ideas on these two matters.⁶

THE PATRIARCHAL NARRATIVES

I turn now to a consideration of the patriarchal narratives in chs. 12–36. The most striking literary phenomenon which confronts us here is the presence of an E appendix at the end of the Abraham story. This appendix, chs. 20–22, comprises four episodes: (i) that of Sarah and Abimelech, king of Gerar (20 1–17); (ii) the expulsion of Hagar and her son Ishmael from Abraham's household (21 2, 6–21); (iii) the treaty made by Abraham and Abimelech at Beersheba (21 22–32); (iv) the test of Abraham's faith (22 1–13, 19).

The majority of scholars have seen in the appendix evidence that there once existed a complete E version of the story of Abraham, a version which was doubtless closely parallel to the J version but which contained a few traditions not present in J. The editor who combined the J and E versions placed these extra traditions at the end of the J account. Volz has argued that the presence of the E supplement does not imply the existence of a separate E version of the life of Abraham. He maintains that E was merely a reviser (*Umdichter*) of J.⁷

⁶ For a discussion of the various theories regarding the literary structure of the primeval history, see the unpublished doctoral dissertation of my former student, C. J. de Catanzaro, "A Literary Analysis of Genesis I–XI," University of Toronto, 1957.

⁷ Paul Volz and Wilhelm Rudolph, *Der Elohst als Erzähler. Ein Irrweg der Pentateuchkritik?* Beihefte z. ZAW, 63, pp. 34–35.

There can be no question that E was a reviser, whatever else he may have been. The first two of the four E episodes were manifestly designed to counteract the unfavorable impression of Abraham created by the J story in ch. 12 (where he lies about his wife) and the J story in ch. 16 (where he callously acquiesces in Sarah's ruthless expulsion of her maid Hagar). Samuel Sandmel, in his presidential address to this Society in 1961, pointed out the disinclination of redactors to alter or expunge the received text; they resorted instead to the "process of neutralizing by addition."⁸ So in this case E left the J stories unaltered but neutralized them by composing similar episodes in a new setting, and in these Abraham's behavior is above reproach.

The question still remains, Does the presence of the E supplement to the Abraham story imply the existence of a complete E version of the life of Abraham? If we assume that it does, how are we to conceive of this E version as fulfilling its apologetic or corrective function? The question becomes all the more difficult to answer if one accepts the usual view that J and E circulated in different areas, E in Israel, J in Judah. Since the E stories clearly depend for their effectiveness on being in close proximity to the J stories, we must assume either that there was an E life of Abraham which contained the J stories or that there was only a J life and that it was corrected by having the E stories appended to it. The latter is certainly the simpler alternative. Why multiply sources when there is no need to do so?

The objection which has been raised against regarding chs. 20-22 as a mere supplement is that there is ample evidence elsewhere of the existence of an E document with a distinctive emphasis and outlook of its own.⁹ It is quite true that an E document is encountered farther on in Genesis, but I shall endeavor to show that it is by no means as extensive as ordinarily supposed and therefore cannot be used here as an argument for the existence of a full-fledged E version of the Abraham story.

In recent years the theory has been put forward by a number of scholars, such as Pedersen, Mowinckel, Noth, von Rad, and Weiser, that some of the stories in the Pentateuch were designed for cultic use. This theory is to be the subject of a symposium tomorrow morning, and I do not wish to encroach on the territory of my colleagues any more than is absolutely necessary. But I cannot avoid referring to it briefly since the problem which we have encountered in the Abraham story receives its most likely solution in the light of this hypothesis. I would point out first that Robert H. Pfeiffer, president of this Society in 1950, believed, and in my opinion literary criticism supports his be-

⁸ *JBL*, 80 (1961), p. 120.

⁹ See, e. g., G. W. Anderson, *A Critical Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 34-35, and A. Weiser, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 112.

lief, that the early J story of Abraham began not with the list of the patriarch's ancestors in ch. 11 but with the account of his call in ch. 12.¹⁰ If so, it would indicate that the J story was never intended to be a complete biography of the patriarch. Only the most dramatic and religiously significant episodes in his career were utilized in the cultic document. Details such as who his ancestors were and where he was born were left in the care of oral tradition.

From the time that the J story of Abraham was written down, two forms of the story were in existence, the oral and the written. One of the mistakes made by the older generation of critics was that they envisaged the period of oral transmission as coming to an end with the reduction of the traditions to writing. They made no allowance for the continued existence of the two forms side by side. Modern critics, it seems to me, are making the mistake of claiming that both forms of the tradition remained fluid, that they interacted on one another and that consequently it is impossible to work out a neat separation of the sources.¹¹ There can be no doubt that the oral tradition remained in a flexible stage and grew with the passage of time, but literary criticism demonstrates clearly, in my opinion, that the written tradition acquired a fixed and almost unalterable form from the beginning. It could only be modified by supplementation, not by alteration, as the E addition to the Abraham story shows.

If the written version of the Abraham story, the so-called J version, was a cultic document — and there seem to be good reasons for regarding it as such — is it not highly improbable that such a document was subject to frequent change? In view of the conservatism of religions, it seems likely that changes were made only at long intervals and only when sufficient pressures had accumulated, and the changes would then be made under official auspices. I suggest that the E supplement to the Abraham story constitutes the first such revision. The first two episodes in it were clearly added for apologetic reasons, as already pointed out. May we not see in the third episode about the treaty made between Abraham and Abimelech at Beersheba a response to a demand from Beersheba that its claim to have also been the scene of some of the patriarch's activity be recognized? The fourth episode about how God accepted a ram from Abraham in place of his son Isaac may well have been intended, as many have suggested, to undermine the old custom of sacrificing the first-born male child (see Exod 22 28, EV 22 29).

Those scholars who take the E supplement as evidence of an E version of the story of Abraham have approached the Jacob story (25 19–34; 27–36) with the *a priori* assumption that J and E versions of it once existed also, and that the received story represents an inter-

¹⁰ *Introduction to the Old Testament*³, p. 141.

¹¹ See A. Weiser, *op. cit.*, pp. 81–82, 96–99.

weaving of these two strands.¹² The inadequacy of this theory as applied to ch. 27, the story of how Jacob defrauded his brother Esau of his birthright, was pointed out by Cassuto a few years ago in his book on the documentary hypothesis.¹³ The JE hypothesis had reduced this masterpiece of literary art to a shambles, to mere literary rubble. Cassuto demonstrated its literary and dramatic unity. The fact that the phenomena presented by this chapter can be explained in other ways than by resorting to a theory of dual authorship does not necessarily mean that the theory will not work in other cases. It does at least serve to remind us that we should be wary about turning to the JE hypothesis for the solution of all the literary problems which the Jacob story presents.

A story which has been regarded as offering a particularly good illustration of the interweaving of J and E strands is that in the latter part of ch. 31 which tells of a treaty made between Laban the Aramean and his Hebrew son-in-law Jacob. The making of the treaty involved the setting up of two stone monuments, a cairn and a pillar, to mark the boundary between their respective territories. The mention of the two monuments is usually taken as evidence that two sources have been combined, the cairn and the place name *Gilead* being attributed to J, and the pillar (*maššebah*) and the place name *Mizpah* being attributed to E. It is inherently improbable, however, that at this point the J tradition explained how the district of Gilead received its name since the story demands a reference to a border point, not to a district. What the story is trying to explain is the origin of the compound place name *Mizpah of Gilead*. This required mention of the setting up of two monuments, a *maššebah* to explain the first element *Mizpah*, and a cairn of witness (*gal 'ēd*) to explain the second element *Gilead*. The story composed by the author may not be so smooth as we today might wish, but obviously he had set himself a very difficult task. Thus ch. 31 provides another instance where the JE hypothesis is misleading.

One reason for believing that there is an E strand present in the Jacob story is that some parts of it employ the divine name *Elohim* rather than YHWH. I would not like to belittle too much the value of the divine names as a criterion for source division, but it must be admitted that the occurrence of *Elohim* in a non-P passage does not automatically stamp it as being from E. A writer who normally employed

¹² Skinner, *Genesis (ICC)*, p. 356, admits, however, that the J and E strands in the Jacob story "are so closely and continuously blended that their separation is always difficult and occasionally impossible, while no lengthy context can be wholly assigned to the one or to the other The J and E recensions of the life of Jacob were so much alike, and so complete, that they ran easily into a single compound narrative whose strands are naturally often hard to unravel"

¹³ U. Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis and the Composition of the Pentateuch*, Lecture VII.

YHWH might be led by the nature of his story, or of a particular episode in his story, to use *Elohim* instead. Thus the occurrence of *Elohim* in the story of Jacob's dream at Bethel in ch. 28 is not necessarily a proof that the story is from E. The choice of divine name is clearly dictated by the fact that the author is trying to explain the origin of the place name *Beth-el*. I believe that most scholars would be willing to concede this. It is not the occurrence of *Elohim* which has led them to attribute the story to E but the fact that there is a J insertion (vss. 13–15) right in the middle of it. This would seem to preclude an assignment of the story to J. The fallacy in this argument is that there are good grounds for believing that the inserted passage is by a late J author whose supplements to the Abraham story I shall deal with presently. If the intrusive passage in ch. 28 is by a late J author, there is, of course, no reason why the basic narrative cannot be attributed to early J. In fact, there are positive reasons for doing so since the previous parts of the Jacob story (25 21, 24–26a, 27–34; 27 1–45) employ the divine name *YHWH*. The change to *Elohim* in ch. 28 is readily intelligible and gives no ground for believing that at this point a new source is encountered.¹⁴

The narrative in chs. 29–30 dealing with the birth of Jacob's children has also been used to support the theory that a full-fledged E story of Jacob once existed. The divine name *YHWH* is used in the first part of the narrative (29 31–35), but at the beginning of ch. 30 there is a sudden change to *Elohim* and then, at the end of the account, a change back to *YHWH* (30 24). The use of *YHWH* at the beginning and end, and of *Elohim* in the middle, would seem to warrant the belief that a block of E material has been incorporated into a J narrative. However, when one observes that *YHWH* is reserved for use with the first four sons of Leah culminating in Judah, and then in connection with the birth of Joseph (who represents Israel), he begins to suspect that the use of the divine names has nothing whatever to do with documentary sources but is governed by considerations of tribal primacy and prestige. The sacred name of *YHWH* is used by the author as a subtle way of conferring a special distinction on the two tribal groups which were the most important politically.¹⁵

¹⁴ The occurrence of *YHWH* in 28 16, 21 is an additional reason for assigning the basic narrative, of which these verses form a part, to J, for it is unlikely that an E writer would have employed *YHWH*.

¹⁵ The use of *YHWH* with Reuben and Simeon is probably due to the writer's desire to avoid changing the divine names too frequently. In any case, the distinction accorded Judah was not thereby threatened since these tribes were no longer in a position to challenge Judah's claim to leadership. The absence of a divine name in connection with Levi is an added reason for believing that the use of the names is governed by political considerations. Levi, as the priestly tribe, was treated by the author as above politics. To judge from 49 1–15 the normal position of Zebulon and Issachar in the list of tribes

While most of the chapters which have been thought to contain an E strand prove on closer examination to be literary units, there are reasons for believing that the Jacob story did receive an E supplement in much the same way as the Abraham story and for much the same reason. The ground for this belief is the occurrence of the divine name *Elohim* in a number of passages where it is difficult to account for its presence by any other theory than that of E authorship. Two of these passages are found in ch. 31 (vss. 4-16 and 38-42), where they seem to have been inserted for the purpose of putting Jacob in a more favorable light. The original Jacob story was not markedly religious; it laid more emphasis on Jacob's cleverness than on his piety. The time came, however, when it was felt desirable to give the story a more religious flavor, and so the two passages mentioned were inserted. The first points out that Jacob's success was due not to his own cleverness but to God who frustrated Laban's attempts to defraud him and that even Laban's own daughters turned against him. The second passage depicts Jacob as "the ideal shepherd, solicitous for his master's interests . . . and careless of his personal comfort" (Skinner, p. 398).¹⁶

The use of *Elohim* in ch. 33 (vss. 5, 10, 11) and of *Elohim, ha—elohim*, and "the *el*" in ch. 35 (vss. 1, 3, 5, 7) has suggested that these chapters are also by E. However, the narrative in 33 1-17, 18 is an essential part of the basic story and is probably to be assigned to J. His employment of *Elohim* doubtless reflects a feeling on his part that Esau was henceforth to be regarded as outside the community of YHWH. Ch. 34 and 35 1-8, 16-22a can be attributed with great probability to Late J since they exhibit a number of his characteristic expressions.

An examination of the E material in the Jacob story thus reveals that it is neither sufficiently extensive nor of such a character as to warrant the theory that a complete E version of the story once existed.

Having examined the E material in the patriarchal narratives, I turn now to an examination of the J stratum in these narratives. The principal problem here is how to account for the presence of words and expressions and religious ideas which, to judge from their occurrence elsewhere in Hebrew literature, are of late date. Thus three passages (15 7; 18 17-19; 26 5b) are recognized to exhibit deuteronomic coloring. It does not seem possible to accept the usual view that they are later interpolations since, in the case of the first two at least, they are an integral part of their context which would be mutilated by their removal.

was immediately after Judah. The shift to a later position which is found here is obviously dictated by a desire to have the use of *YHWH* in the first part of the narrative culminate with the mention of Judah.

¹⁶ Other passages in this chapter which may be assigned to E are vss. 24-25, 29, and 53.

The most natural explanation is that the author of the whole context in which the passages occur lived subsequent to the publication of the Book of Deuteronomy.

In 12 2-3 we meet with the idea that Israel is to be a source of blessing to all mankind. This idea does not appear elsewhere in Hebrew literature until the time of Deutero-Isaiah (42 1-7; 49 6; 52 13-53 12). It is such a striking idea that if it had been present in the early J story of Abraham it is inconceivable that none of the prophets before Deutero-Isaiah would have referred to it. This is all the more true if the story was recited to the people on festival occasions.

We also find in the J material a number of ideas which anticipate or resemble ideas found later in P. For example, in three passages (12 8; 13 4; and 26 25), which refer to Abraham and Isaac building altars, there appears to be a deliberate avoidance of having the patriarchs take the next logical step, that of offering sacrifice. Instead they are said to have "called upon the name of YHWH," i. e., to have invoked God under the name of YHWH. As is well known, P also avoids any reference to the patriarchs offering sacrifice since the Torah had not yet been revealed. It is probable, therefore, that the author of the three passages mentioned lived not too far removed from that of P.¹⁷

In three other passages (14 22; 16 13; and 22 33) we meet with the idea that YHWH was present in Canaan before the entry of the Hebrews but was worshiped under the name of El. Thus in 14 22 Abraham is said to have recognized YHWH in El-Elyon, the god of Jerusalem. In 16 13 it is stated that YHWH was worshiped at Beerlahai-roi under the name of El-Roi. According to 21 33 he was worshiped at Beersheba under the name of El-Olam. This is reminiscent of P's doctrine, expressed in Exod 6 3, that YHWH appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as El-Shaddai, but it is not the same idea. It would seem, rather, to be a first step in the direction of the doctrine which we later find in P. Again one feels that the author of this concept cannot have lived too long before the time of P.

It is evident from the evidence adduced that the J material in the patriarchal narratives contains a number of late ideas and expressions. The question arises, How shall we account for their presence? Are we faced with the same situation as in the primeval history, where early and late elements are fused into an organic whole? My personal view is that we are not. I believe that it is quite possible to separate late from

¹⁷ For the normal sequence: build . . . sacrifice, see Num 23 14, 29-30; Josh 8 30-31; Judg 21 4. Where this sequence does not occur, one suspects that the attitude found in P is already in existence. In the two J passages, 12 7 and 13 8, it is possible that an original reference to the act of sacrifice has been deleted. E has the act of building followed by the naming of the altar (35 7), except in 22 9-13 where a reference to the sacrifice of the ram is essential to the point of the story.

early elements in the patriarchal narratives. In view of the current reaction against documentary analysis, such an assertion is bound to be met with skepticism, even ridicule. Every new *Introduction to the Old Testament* assures us that the traditions became so fused at the oral stage that it is no longer possible to disentangle them.¹⁸ I cannot agree with the latter assertion, although I am in sympathy with the reaction against a purely documentary approach. I have already tried to demonstrate that the theory of two parallel documents, J and E, running throughout the Abraham and Jacob stories is without foundation. Sandmel has justly castigated the effort of scholars to divide the stories in the Pentateuch into J and E strands as inspired by "parallelomania."¹⁹ If one approaches the Abraham and Jacob stories unencumbered by the JE hypothesis, he soon discovers that what he is faced with is a basic document which has received supplementation. Sandmel calls these supplements "haggadic additions." They do seem to represent oral traditions which had grown up on the basis of the written tradition. In expressing my faith in the possibility of separating these oral, haggadic additions from the basic narrative, I am giving my allegiance to something other than the ordinary documentary hypothesis.

The next question which we must ask ourselves is whether the supplements are the work of one hand or of many hands. Did the process of amplification of the basic narrative extend over several centuries? Most scholars favor the latter alternative and postulate a long series of glossators. But is not such a theory inherently improbable? Would official documents — and I can see no escape from regarding them as such — be open to tampering by any scribe who took it into his head to add a comment in the margin? Such a possibility is to my mind inconceivable. On the other hand, there seems to be no reason why all this supplementary J material cannot be attributed to a single hand, provided that he be dated in the postexilic period. It is true that the supplements have a somewhat heterogeneous character and were manifestly drawn in part from different sources, but that does not prove that they cannot have been added by the same hand. I would call this hand "Late J" and would suggest that his work represents an official supplementation of the Abraham-Jacob cultic document, undertaken in the early postexilic period. I suggested earlier that in the E supplements to that document we have the first official revision; in the Late J supplements I see a second official revision.

Evidence that an important section of this supplementary material comes from one hand is provided by an examination of the divine promises to the patriarchs. The basic J story contained only a brief

¹⁸ See, e. g., Weiser, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

¹⁹ *JBL*, 80 (1961), pp. 105-22.

promise of the land made to Abraham: "To thy seed I will give this land" (12 7), and a promise in ch. 18 that he and his wife Sarah would have a son despite their advanced age. These references were far too meager to satisfy later generations, and the theme of the promises was taken up and expanded by Late J. Into the story of Abraham's call he inserted a divine promise that Abraham would become a great nation and a source of blessing to all mankind (12 2-3). In ch. 13, after the account of the separation of Abraham and Lot, he inserted a promise that the land would be the possession of Abraham's descendants for ever and that his descendants would be as innumerable as the dust of the earth (vss. 14-17). The whole of ch. 15 is his handiwork. Here the promises are repeated and sealed by a solemn covenant ceremony. Scholars who are afflicted with "parallelomania" assign portions of the chapter to J and the rest to E, and go so far as to maintain that the first traces of the E document are to be found here. The reason why the literary unity of the chapter has fallen under suspicion is that the promise of descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky has a time setting a bit later than the promise of the land which has its beginning just before sunset. It is true that from a strict chronological point of view the second promise should precede the first, but surely in stories of this kind dramatic effect is more important than strict adherence to chronology. Manifestly the promise of the land was more important to the writer than the promise of numerous descendants. Hence he made it the climax of his story and had it sealed by a solemn covenant ceremony. In ch. 22 he has Abraham's act of supreme faith rewarded by a renewal of the promises (vss. 14-18). He includes two divine promises in the story of Isaac (26 3-5 and 24) and inserts one into the Jacob story, where, as already pointed out, failure to perceive its true origin has led scholars to attribute the basic narrative to E.

It has long been recognized that the promises mentioned are closely linked by content and vocabulary and that they are either detachable from their context or the context itself is late. The fact that the number of promises is seven, the perfect number (four to Abraham, two to Isaac, and one to Jacob), can scarcely be regarded as a mere coincidence and is an additional reason for believing that they are the work of one author. May we not see in Late J's concern with the divine promises to the patriarchs an historian's way of conveying a message of comfort and hope to his people in a time of gloom and despair? If Late J be of postexilic date, the whole matter becomes readily intelligible.

It may be felt that the references in the Books of Exodus and Deuteronomy (Exod 33 1; Deut 1 8; 6 10; 9 5; 30 20; 34 4) to the promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob prove that the early J tradition contained promises to Isaac and Jacob as well as to Abraham. The only promise specifically referred to, however, is the promise of the land made to

Abraham in 12 7. It seems necessary, therefore, to regard the mention of Isaac and Jacob as an extension, resulting from the fact that the three patriarchs formed a closely knit trio and a promise made to one was regarded as applicable to all. Certainly literary criticism provides no ground for believing that the basic J narrative contained promises to Isaac and Jacob.

It is impossible to discuss all of the additions made by Late J, but brief mention should be made of a few more. He prefixed to the Abraham story a list of the patriarch's ancestors. The list was subsequently modified by P, but it is unlikely that it was changed in essentials. In the bit which P left intact (11 28-31) we find for the first time an assertion that Abraham came originally from Ur of the Chaldeans. He also added the story found in ch. 14 in order to satisfy the natural curiosity as to when Abraham lived. The patriarch was declared to have been a contemporary of four famous kings of the past whose names figured in some popular legend. Many commentators have recognized that the chapter in its present form is late.²⁰ In ch. 18 he added a section (vss. 22a-32) designed to justify God's seemingly ruthless destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The reader is assured that if God had been able to find ten righteous persons in Sodom he would not have destroyed the city. The justice of God was a matter of deep concern to Jewish thinkers after the destruction of the Jewish state in 587.

A much longer addition made to the Abraham story is found in ch. 24, which tells how and where Abraham got a wife for his son Isaac. There is surely to be discerned in this story an emphasis on purity of blood, a matter of great importance to postexilic Judaism. Significant for the date of the chapter is the occurrence of the postexilic expression "YHWH, the god of heaven and earth" (vs. 3; cf. vs. 7).²¹

Another contribution of Late J to the patriarchal narratives was the Isaac story in ch. 26. It is clear from the way in which this story is thrust into the first part of the Jacob story, where it breaks the natural connection between chs. 25 and 27, that it did not form a part of the early J document. Some scholars have tried valiantly to maintain an early date for the Rebekah-Abimelech episode in vss. 7-11, declaring it to be earlier than the similar stories in chs. 12 and 20. But Skinner (p. 365) showed years ago that the version in ch. 26 is "the most colourless and least original form of the tradition." It may be worth pointing out again that deuteronomic coloring is observable in vs. 5.

Late J's additions to the Jacob story were somewhat miscellaneous in character, comprising an oracle in 25 22-23 predicting the destiny of the twins, Esau and Jacob, a divine promise to the patriarch in 28 13-15,

²⁰ Sandmel, (*op. cit.*, p. 116) calls it "a late haggada." See Skinner, p. 274.

²¹ See D. K. Andrews, "Yahweh the God of the Heavens" in *The Seed of Wisdom* (Essays in honour of T. J. Meek), ed. W. S. McCullough, (Toronto, 1964), pp. 45-57.

a play on the name Mahanaim in 32 4-14a, a claim that Jacob had purchased the site at Shechem where he set up his tent and built an altar (33 19-20), and a story about Jacob's daughter Dinah and the slaughter of the Shechemites by Simeon and Levi (ch.34). Whereas the early J tradition seems to have ended with Jacob's arrival at Shechem, Late J uproots him from there and has him move first to Bethel (35 1-8) and then in the direction of his old home (35 16-22a).²²

THE JOSEPH STORY

The Joseph story represents a different problem from the patriarchal narratives in that it seems at first sight to be composed of E material throughout, except for chs. 38 and 39 and some supplements by P. It has long been recognized, however, that the E material is composite, some of it being genuine E and some pseudo-E, the latter being really J. Just why J should employ the divine name Elohim in the Joseph story has not been satisfactorily explained. It cannot be because the setting of the story is outside YHWH's land, for neither Early J (see 29 31) nor Late J (see 20 18; 24 26 ff.; 26 12, 22, 24, 28; 29 31-33, 35; 30 24, 27, 30; 31 3, 49; 32 10) shows any scruples about using the sacred name of YHWH in such a setting. The most natural explanation is that J was accommodating himself to the usage of his E source so that his additions would blend with their background. This implies, of course, that this J is later than E.

For the literary critic the most important problem posed by the Joseph story is whether the J elements in it presuppose the existence of a J version of the life of Joseph. Most scholars believe that they do, although Rudolph²³ has argued for only one basic strand. Let us look at some of these J elements.

The first example is found in ch. 37. There the basic E story has the eldest brother Reuben persuade the others not to kill Joseph but throw him into a pit whence he planned to rescue him later, but his plan miscarried when some Midianites passed by, found Joseph, and carried him off. Into this E story has been inserted a short J section (vss. 25-27 and the words "and Midianite traders passed by and drew up Joseph from the pit" in vs. 28) which gives Judah the credit for persuading his brothers not to kill Joseph but to sell him to the Ishmaelites instead. The question is, Are these verses an extract from a J life of Joseph, or are they a mere supplement composed by J himself who wished to have the ancestor of the tribe of Judah play a leading rôle in the story right

²² For a fuller discussion of the literary problems raised by the patriarchal narratives, see the forthcoming doctoral dissertation by my student, Professor N. E. Wagner, Waterloo Lutheran University, Waterloo, Ont.

²³ See the work cited in note 7, pp. 177-83.

from the start? Manifestly it is not possible, without more evidence, to decide at this point between these alternatives.

As far as ch. 38 (the story of Judah and Tamar) is concerned, it has nothing to do with the Joseph story and cannot have formed an integral part of a J version of it, assuming that such existed. Ch. 39 (the story of Joseph's temptation by his master's wife) is usually regarded as coming from the assumed J life of Joseph, but if it had formed part of such, it is impossible to explain why it employs the divine name YHWH when the rest of the J material employs Elohim. A more natural solution of the problem is to regard ch. 39 as a separate literary source. It is undoubtedly a Hebrew version of the Egyptian *Tale of Two Brothers*²⁴ which was in circulation in Palestine and which J inserted into the Joseph story because of its high moral tone. Chs. 38 and 39 have been thrust into an E narrative and interrupt the natural connection between ch. 37 and ch. 40, vs. 2. Thus the literary situation which confronts us in the first part of the Joseph story is that a basic E narrative has received inserts and supplements from J.

The principal support for the theory that a J version of the story of Joseph once existed is the occurrence of an extensive block of J material at the end of the story, chs. 43-45 and parts of 46-48 and 50. In this material we again find a pronounced tendency to stress the rôle of Judah while Reuben is completely ignored. Nevertheless, in view of the number and nature of the stories it cannot be seriously maintained that they are *de novo* compositions, as might be argued in the case of the J insertion in ch. 37. They may have a tendentious character but they seem to rest on earlier tradition. The E story can scarcely have ended with ch. 42, leaving Simeon a hostage in Egypt. It must have gone on to relate the second trip of Jacob's sons and, in fact, to have adhered pretty much to the outline of the present J narrative but with Reuben playing the leading rôle. Therefore, it can be argued with a considerable degree of probability that the block of J material found in chs. 43-50 represents a retelling of the E story, done in such a way as to have Judah play the leading rôle. The evidence for an independent J version of the Joseph story thus becomes very insubstantial. The J material in the Joseph story can be best understood as in part *de novo* compositions inserted into a basic E story and in part a recasting of the E story. This makes it unlikely that the J of the Joseph story is the same as the early J of the Abraham-Jacob story. There are actually a number of indications, such as his use of the divine name El-Shaddai in 43 14 and the expression "be fruitful and multiply" in 47 27, that he lived not too far from the time of P.

²⁴ See John A. Wilson, "Egyptian Myths, Tales, and Mortuary Texts" in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, ed. J. B. Pritchard, pp. 23-25.

The fact that a late J hand supplemented the patriarchal narratives and that a late J hand supplemented the Joseph story raises the possibility that they are one and the same person. When it is recalled that the primeval history is also by a late J author, one must consider the further possibility that the whole of the Book of Genesis, apart from later P supplements, is his handiwork. A comparison of the late J materials in the three sections of the book does suggest that they proceed from the same hand.

Common to the primeval history and the late J additions to the patriarchal narratives are:

- (a) a concern to defend the justice of God (6 1-8 and 18 22a-32);
- (b) the formula "to call upon the name of YHWH" (4 26 and the references given above);
- (c) their view regarding the antiquity of YHWH worship. The primeval history has it go back to the founding of a new line of humanity beginning with Enosh the son of Seth (4 26), and refers to YHWH as the god of Shem, i. e., of the Semites (9 26). The late J additions to the patriarchal narratives, and the early J form of those narratives as well, depict the patriarchs as worshiping God under the name of YHWH (12 9; 13 4, 14; 14 22, etc.; and 12 1, 4, 7, etc.). This is in line with the doctrine found in the primeval history.

One of the strongest arguments for believing that the primeval history and the late J additions to the patriarchal narratives are by the same hand is the fact that the former, with its emphasis on man's tendency to evil and the failure of God's attempt to eradicate evil by force (by sending a great flood which drowned most of mankind), leads up to the idea expressed in 12 2-3: God has chosen Israel to spread religious and moral enlightenment among men and so deliver them from the evil inherent in their nature. The primeval history without the late J supplements is a beginning without an end.

The connections between the late J additions to the patriarchal narratives and the late J additions to the Joseph story are not quite so obvious because of the difference in subject matter, but there seems to be no reason whatever why both sets of supplements cannot be attributed to the same author.

Before leaving the Joseph story a word should be said about the basic E narrative. What is its relation to the E materials found in the Abraham and Jacob stories? Do they all derive from a common E document? It seems in the highest degree improbable. The E materials in the Abraham and Jacob stories are secondary and supplemental in character and cannot be regarded as extracts from a primary source. Furthermore, they are surely of Judean origin — almost certainly so if

they represent an official revision of the J cultic document. The E Joseph story is just as certainly of Israelite origin. It is not surprising, then, that such widely divergent views regarding the date and provenance of E have been championed by scholars. They have been treating as one two quite disparate elements.

Let me now sum up the results of this investigation of the literary structure and date of Genesis. The author was undoubtedly Late J, who can be dated with some confidence to the postexilic period. The first and last parts of the book are his own composition, although based on earlier sources. In the case of the primeval history these sources seem to be of diverse origin, mainly oral but possibly some written. For the last part of his book the author utilized the E story of Joseph, part of which he left untouched and part of which he recast to give Judah a more prominent rôle. For the central section of his book he drew upon a J document, probably cultic in origin, which presented the Abraham and Jacob stories in connected sequence. This document had already been subjected to official revision by the addition of E supplements.

It is probable that in the work of Late J we witness not merely another officially inspired attempt to revise a document used for cultic purposes but an attempt to gather up and preserve in written form a selection of those traditions about the early history of mankind and about the Hebrew patriarchs which had hitherto enjoyed for the most part only an oral existence. The destruction of the Jewish state in 587 B.C. may well have provided the impetus for such an undertaking.

The editorial work of P represented a further official revision which took place about 400 B.C. P not only supplemented Late J's Book of Genesis but prefixed it to the Mosaic tradition in the Books of Exodus and Numbers,²⁵ which books he also supplemented extensively. He detached the Book of Deuteronomy from R^D's history and appended it to the Mosaic tradition, thereby creating the Pentateuch as we have it. Before P there was no Pentateuch, not even a Tetratauch as Engnell has maintained.

If the theory which I have propounded regarding the literary history of the Book of Genesis be correct, it is obvious that current views regarding the Pentateuch will have to be radically revised. In the first place, we must recognize that Genesis was of later origin than the early parts of the Books of Exodus and Numbers.²⁶ This undermines the

²⁵ The fact that the connecting tissue (Exod 1 1-5, 7*) between Genesis and Exodus is by P indicates that it was he who joined the two books together for the first time. In my *Mosaic Tradition*, pp. 27-28, I presented reasons for believing that the Book of Exodus originally began with the story of Moses' call in ch. 3, which would be appropriate if the story was designed for cultic use.

²⁶ At least one of its sources, the J story of Abraham, must, however, be earlier than the early parts of Exodus, for Exod 33 1 refers to Gen 12 7. The story may possibly date

argument that the promises of the land in Genesis presuppose that the J and E narratives must have carried the story of the Hebrews as far as the conquest and settlement in Canaan. Secondly, we must give up the idea of two primary, parallel strands, J and E, running through Genesis. And thirdly, if the JE theory does not hold good for Genesis, it is time to take another look at the literary structure of the Books of Exodus and Numbers. Some years ago I published a study of the Mosaic Tradition²⁷ in which I endeavored to demonstrate that the JE theory was without foundation as far as Exodus and Numbers are concerned. My more recent study of the Book of Genesis has only served to confirm me in the correctness of that conclusion. Volz and Mowinckel²⁸ have also expressed the view that the concept of J and E as two parallel narratives cannot be maintained. The whole pentateuchal problem stands in need of fresh investigation.

It would be too much to hope that in a brief paper I have succeeded in making any converts to the somewhat radical views I have presented. I shall be content if I have convinced some of the younger members of the Society that the foundations of many scholarly reconstructions in the OT field stand in need of careful re-examination, and that the prospect of putting those foundations in sound shape is not as hopeless a task as it has sometimes appeared to be. One thing is certain, OT studies can never rest on a secure foundation until the pentateuchal problem is solved.

from the time that the Hebron sanctuary served as the royal sanctuary, i. e., from the early part of David's reign.

²⁷ *The Mosaic Tradition*, (Toronto, 1949).

²⁸ For the latest expression of Mowinckel's views, see his *Tetrateuch-Pentateuch-Hexateuch* (Berlin, 1964), pp. 1-8. It will be noted that he believes that the traditions received their present basic form at the hands of a younger J, a *Jahwista variatus*, "Jv," although he is inclined to regard Jv as a "school" rather than as an individual.