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Israel Finkelstein – Thomas Römer

Comments on the Historical Background of the Jacob Narrative in Genesis

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I Introduction

If one accepts the traditional Documentary hypothesis,¹ the so-called Neo-Documentary Hypothesis,² or even a late date of the Jahwist (with or without an »Elohist«),³ the Jacob story is considered to be part of a larger narrative strand that starts with the creation of the world or the Patriarchs and continues with the Moses story until the death of Moses or the conquest of the land. This model, according to which the Pentateuch or Hexateuch is composed of three or two parallel strands (if one dismisses the Elohist), to which was added the book of Deuteronomy, has been given up, at least in Continental Europe, by a majority of scholars. Already in 1976 Rendtorff⁴ had argued that the Patriarchal traditions constitute an independent narrative unit that had been linked to the other themes of the Pentateuch only at a late stage. In regard to the stories about Abraham, Isaac and Jacob one can observe that the three Patriarchs were only linked secondarily, especially through the theme of divine promises and the fact that Yhwh presents himself to Isaac as the »God of your father Abraham«, and to Jacob as the »God of your father Isaac«. Since the 1990ies, Pentateuchal research has rediscovered observations made by W. Staerk and K. Galling, according to whom the Patriarchs and the Exodus narratives were originally two different (competing) origin myths.⁵

¹ See for the Patriarchal narratives: L. Ruppert, *Genesis. Ein kritischer und theologischer Kommentar*, 2. Teilband: Gen 11,26–25,18, fzb 98, 2002.

² J. S. Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch: Renewing the Documentary Hypothesis*, ABRL, 2012.

³ J. Van Seters, *Prologue to History. The Yahwist as Historian in Genesis*, 1992, and recently *idem*, *The Yahwist: A Historian of Israelite Origins*, 2013.

⁴ R. Rendtorff, *Das überlieferungsgeschichtliche Problem des Pentateuch*, BZAW 147, 1976; English translation, *The Problem of the Process of Transmission in the Pentateuch*, JSOTSup 89, 1990.

⁵ W. Staerk, *Studien zur Religions- und Sprachgeschichte des alten Testaments*, I. und II. Heft, 1899; K. Galling, *Die Erwählungstraditionen Israels*, BZAW 48, 1928.

According to Römer, Schmid, Gertz and now also Blum and others⁶ it was the Priestly writer or redactor who created for the first time a link between the Patriarchs and the Exodus-Moses-story. The acceptance of this hypothesis does not necessarily mean that the two origin traditions were written down for the first time in the exilic or early postexilic period. In regard to the Patriarchal tradition, A. de Pury has promoted the idea that the Jacob story conserves an old tradition that reflects realities from the end of the second millennium BCE, the first written narrative would have been composed in the eighth century BCE.⁷ A similar position is advocated by Blum.⁸ On the other hand, N. Na'aman in a forthcoming article argues that the Jacob story had been composed during the exilic period, as part of a Patriarchal narrative comprising the stories about Abraham and Isaac.⁹

The current article tries to approach the question of the date and the historical contexts of the Jacob narrative by combining archaeological and exegetical considerations. We wish to look for indications that may help locate and date elements – or layers – of the complex narratives and try to reconstruct the long-term history, or better said cultural history of these traditions. Such indications can be found in relationship between texts, geo-political background, settlement and demographic settings, as well as places mentioned and their finds.

Adhering to this method, in a previous article we suggested »stratigraphy« and chronology for the Abraham narratives; we attempted to identify the textual layers and the archaeological-historical realities behind them, starting in the

6 Th. Römer, *Israels Väter. Untersuchungen zur Väterthematik im Deuteronomium und in der deuteronomistischen Tradition*, OBO 99, 1990; K. Schmid, *Erzväter und Exodus. Untersuchungen zur doppelten Begründung der Ursprünge Israels innerhalb der Geschichtsbücher des Alten Testaments*, WMANT 81, 1999; English Translation, *Genesis and the Moses Story. Israel's Dual Origins in the Hebrew Bible*, Siphrut 3, 2010; J. C. Gertz, *Abraham, Mose und der Exodus. Beobachtungen zur Redaktionsgeschichte von Genesis 15*, in: J. C. Gertz/K. Schmid/M. Witte (eds.), *Abschied vom Jahwisten. Die Komposition des Hexateuch in der jüngsten Diskussion*, BZAW 315, 2002, 63–81; E. Blum, *The Literary Connection Between the Books of Genesis and Exodus and the End of the Book of Joshua*, in: T. B. Dozeman/K. Schmid (eds.), *A Farewell to the Yahwist? The Composition of the Pentateuch in Recent European Interpretation*, SBL Symposium Series 34, 2006, 89–106; see also E. Otto, *Das Deuteronomium im Pentateuch und Hexateuch. Studien zur Literaturgeschichte von Pentateuch und Hexateuch im Lichte des Deuteronomiumsrahmens*, FAT 30, 2000; A. de Pury, *P^s as the Absolute Beginning*, in: Th. Römer/K. Schmid (eds.), *Les dernières rédactions du Pentateuque, de l'Hexateuque et de l'Ennéateuque*, BEThL 203, 2007, 99–128.

7 A. de Pury, *Situer le cycle de Jacob. Quelques réflexions, vingt-cinq ans plus tard*, in: A. Wénin (ed.), *Studies in the Book of Genesis. Literature, Redaction and History*, BETL 155, 2001, 213–241.

8 E. Blum, *The Jacob Tradition*, in: C. A. Evans/J. N. Lohr/D. L. Petersen (eds.), *The Book of Genesis. Composition, Reception, and Interpretation*, VTS 152, 2012, 181–211.

9 N. Na'aman, *The Jacob Story and the Formation of Biblical Israel*, Tel Aviv (in press).

Iron Age and continuing through Exilic and Post-Exilic times, until (possibly) the Hellenistic period.¹⁰ In what follows we wish to do the same for the Jacob traditions. We will deploy biblical exegesis and insights that come from archaeology and extra-biblical historical sources in order to offer some preliminary observations on strands of »realia« that may be important for revealing the cultural history of the Jacob tradition.

II North and South

It is broadly accepted that the book of Genesis (as well as other parts of the Hebrew Bible) includes Northern traditions; still, there can be no doubt that the final product of the Patriarchal narrative reflects a Southern perspective. This includes the very arrangement of the book of Genesis: the story opens with the Southern Abraham who is made the first patriarch and the grandfather of the Northern Jacob. This was certainly done in order to promote the idea of the dominance of Judah over Israel, in fact, to subordinate Israel to Judah in a time when the Northern Kingdom was no more and Judah became the only heir to the ancient traditions of the Hebrew people. And because of the circular-reasoning nature of early research, this Southern ideology has largely been »inherited« in biblical and historical scholarship.

Yet, if Judah through Abraham is first in the Patriarchal narratives and has been first in traditional research, extra-biblical texts and archaeology both demonstrate that historically, Israel had been the leading force among the Hebrew kingdoms. Israel was demographically and economically developed long before Judah.¹¹ The northern territories on both sides of the Jordan River (the central highlands and the Gilead) had already been densely settled in the Iron I, when the marginal Judean highlands were still depleted demographically.¹² At that time the population ratio between the highlands parts of Israel (including the

10 I. Finkelstein/Th. Römer, *Comments on the Historical Background of the Abraham Narrative: Between »Realia« and Exegetica*, Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel 3 (2014), 45–65.

11 I. Finkelstein, *State Formation in Israel and Judah, A Contrast in Context, A Contrast in Trajectory*, Near Eastern Archaeology 62 (1999), 35–52; *idem*, *Le Royaume biblique oublié*, Collection du Collège de France, 2013; English translation, *The Forgotten Kingdom. The archaeology and history of Northern Israel*, 2013.

12 I. Finkelstein, *The Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement*, 1988; different articles in: I. Finkelstein/N. Na'aman (eds.), *From Nomadism to Monarchy: Archaeological and Historical Aspects of Ancient Israel*, 1994.

Gilead) and Judah can be estimated at 25:1!¹³ Judah started developing in a significant way in the end-phase of the late Iron IIA (late 9th century),¹⁴ and reached a real peak of prosperity only in the Iron IIB-C, in the late 8th and 7th centuries BCE.¹⁵ But even in the mid-8th century (that is, before the take-over of the Gilead by Damascus), the demographic ratio between Israel and Judah can be estimated at ca. 4:1.¹⁶ Population can of course be translated to military and economic strength; indeed, the power of Israel in the days of the Omrides is clearly depicted in the Shalmaneser III's list of participants in the Battle of Qarqar in 853 BCE and hinted at in the Tel Dan and Mesha inscriptions; it is also portrayed in biblical references to both the reign of the Omrides and the somewhat later days of Joash and Jeroboam II (for the latter, e.g., II Reg 13,25; 14,25a.28). In addition, Israel controlled more fertile regions, such as the Jezreel Valley, and trade routes, such as the international highway along the coast and northern valleys as well as the King's Highway in Transjordan. It was also better connected to the coast and other neighboring regions. All this promoted its agricultural output and revenues from trade. In short, demographically, economically, militarily and geo-politically Israel was the dominant power during most of the time when the two Hebrew kingdoms existed side by side.¹⁷ This can also be gleaned at in the Book of Kings, for instance in the prophetic stories about the Omride Dynasty and the accounts in I Reg 22,¹⁸ and II Reg 8,28–29, and regarding the battle of Beth-Shemesh

13 Estimate based on data presented in Finkelstein, *Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement* (above n. 12), 332–333 and adding the population of the Gilead.

14 I. Finkelstein, *The Rise of Jerusalem and Judah: The Missing Link*, *Levant* 33 (2001), 105–115; A. Fantalkin, *The Appearance of Rock-Cut Bench Tombs in Iron Age Judah as a Reflection of State Formation*, in: A. Fantalkin/A. Yassar-Landau (eds.), *Bene Israel: Studies in the Archaeology of Israel and the Levant during the Bronze and Iron Ages in Honour of Israel Finkelstein*, *Culture and History of the Ancient Near East Series* 31, 2008, 17–44; A. Fantalkin/I. Finkelstein, *The Sheshonq I Campaign and the 8th Century Earthquake: More on the Archaeology and History of the South in the Iron I-Iron IIA*, *Tel Aviv* 33 (2006), 18–42; O. Sergei, *The Expansion of Judah in the 9th Century BCE: Date and Historical Context*, *Tel Aviv* 40 (2013), 226–246.

15 D. W. Jamieson-Drake, *Scribes and Schools in Monarchic Judah*, 1991; I. Finkelstein, *The Settlement History of Jerusalem in the Eighth and Seventh Centuries BCE*, *RB* 115 (2008), 499–515; I. Finkelstein/N. A. Silberman, *Temple and Dynasty: Hezekiah, the Remaking of Judah and the Rise of the Pan-Israelite Ideology*, *JSOT* 30 (2006), 259–285.

16 Based on M. Broshi/I. Finkelstein, *The Population of Palestine in Iron Age II*, *BASOR* 287 (1992), 47–60 and references therein.

17 See for an overview Finkelstein, *Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement* (above n. 11).

18 The original identity of the king of Israel in this story is not clear. Only v. 20 identifies him as Ahab, because for the dtr. redactors he was one of the most hated Northern kings. Hence it is not clear whether the story was told with a specific Northern king in mind, or if the narrator needed a »prototype«, like the »Pharaoh« in the Exodus-story (see the discussion of different solutions in

between Joash of Israel and Amaziah of Judah (II Reg 14,8–14). These factors must be taken into consideration when analysing the Patriarchal narratives.

III The Early Jacob Layers

There is reason to assume that the Jacob narrative includes two layers from the Iron Age, one written, from the first half of the 8th century BCE, and an older, oral one, which can be considered as the earliest Jacob tradition. Let us start with the former, and with observations that come from biblical exegesis.

If Hosea 12 dates from the 8th century,¹⁹ we have clear allusions to the existence, at that time, of major episodes from the Jacob Cycle in the book of Genesis: birth and the struggle with his brother and allusion to his name (Gen 25,24–26; cf. Hos 12,4), combat with God (El) or his angel and etymology of the name »Israel«²⁰ (32,23–32; cf. Hos 12,5), encounter in Bethel (28,10–22*; cf. Hos 12,5), enrichment (30,25–42*; cf. Hos 12,9), flight from Aram (31,1–22*; cf. Hos 12,13), allusion to Galaad as »heap of stones« (Gen 31,46–47; cf. Hos 12,12), servitude to a woman (29,15–30*; cf. Hos 12,13), and maybe also Jacob »living in tents« (Gen 25,7; cf. Hos 12,10). These allusions are fostered by identical terms: עקב (Gen 27,36//Hos 12,4), שרה (Gen 32,29//Hos 12,4), יכל (Gen 32,29//Hos 12,4), ברח (Gen 27,43; 31,20–22.27//Hos 12,13), גל (Gen 31,46//Hos 12,12), עבד Gen 29,15.18 etc.//Hos 12,13), ישב (ב)אהלים (Gen 25,27//Hos 12,10). These numerous parallels clearly indicate a relation between Hosea 12 and the Jacob narrative in Genesis. Recently, N. Na’aman has argued, after others, that Hosea 12 was in fact the source that the author of the Jacob narrative picked up in order to build the story in Gen 25–35. But the allusive character of Hosea 12 presupposes that the audience is aware of

E. Würthwein, *Die Bücher der Könige*. 1. Kön 17 – 2. Kön. 25, ATD 11,2, 1984, 261–262. In any case, it is clear that the Judahite king appears as a vassal of a sort.

¹⁹ A. de Pury, *The Jacob Story and the Beginning of the Formation of the Pentateuch*, in: Dozeman/ Schmid (eds.), *A Farewell to the Yahwist?*, 51–72; E. Blum, *Hosea 12 und die Pentateuchüberlieferungen*, in: A. C. Hagedorn/H. Pfeiffer (eds.), *Die Erzväter in der biblischen Tradition (Festschrift Matthias Köckert)*, BZAW 400, 2009, 291–321. See, however, H. Pfeiffer, *Das Heiligtum von Bethel im Spiegel des Hoseabuches*, FRLANT 183, 1999; S. Rudnig-Zelt, *Hoseastudien. Redaktionskritische Untersuchungen zur Genese des Hoseabuches*, FRLANT 213, 2006; J. M. Bos, *Reconsidering the Date and Provenance of the Book of Hosea: The Case for Persian Period Yehud*, 2013, who all advocate a much later date. Here again the argumentation appears circular: since the Pentateuchal texts are »late«, allusions to them must also be late. Also, even if Hos 12 would be the result of late redactional interventions, it still may contain early materials.

²⁰ Text-critical considerations suggest an original ’el.

a well-known story, otherwise the text in Hosea would not be understandable. Of course one cannot decide whether Hosea 12 is alluding to a written or an oral text, but as far as the Jacob-Laban story is concerned, the events to which Hosea 12 refers are the same as those we find in the Genesis narrative. The fact, that Jacob is put into parallel with Ephraim shows that he is not yet understood as the ancestor of a »theological« Israel, but as the Patriarch of Israel. Contrary to Abraham, who appears outside the Pentateuch only in relatively few texts which are not earlier than the Babylonian period, Jacob is mentioned very often, mostly as a designation for »Israel« – the Northern Kingdom. Jer 9,3, which is generally considered to go back to the prophet Jeremiah, also uses the root עקב, which is only attested in Gen 27,36 and Hos 12,4. This indicates knowledge of a tradition about a conflict between Jacob and his brother at the end of the seventh century BCE. In regard to Hosea 12, except for the allusion to his unnamed brother,²¹ all other elements mentioned are related to the Jacob-Laban story. This narrative in its pre-priestly shape may well stem from the 8th century BCE and may have contained all major episodes that appear in the Genesis narrative.²²

The mention of Haran in the story deserves attention. At that time it was the western capital of the Assyrian empire and the story of Jacob's sojourn there could be told in order to demonstrate to the audience how to deal cleverly with the Assyrians, who are portrayed as »Arameans«.²³ There is indeed evidence for a symbiosis between Assyrians and Arameans and for the penetration of Arameans into Assyrian society at all levels. According to Jean-Marie Durand,²⁴ the Neo-Assyrian court was in fact »Aramean«. This is also attested by the fact that Aramaic became an official written language widely-used.²⁵ Another, perhaps better possibility would be to consider the three references to Haran (Gen 27,43; 28,10; 29,4) to be late insertions, from the period of prosperity there in the 6th century.²⁶ The original, Iron Age story would then deal with an Aram on the border

21 This could be an indication that the story of Jacob and Esau/Edom is later than the Jacob-Laban Cycle (see below). According to Na'aman (Jacob Story [above n. 9]) in the oral tradition Jacob's brother was Judah, but this is a difficult solution, because the mention of Judah in Hos 12,3 is considered to be a late replacement of an original »Israel«.

22 E. A. Knauf, *Towards an Archaeology of the Hexateuch*, in: Gertz/Schmid/Witte (eds.), *Abschied vom Jahwisten*, 275–294; Blum, *Jacob Tradition* (above n. 8).

23 This is in our view a better option than identifying the »Arameans« with Israelite deportees as proposed by N. Na'aman, *Jacob Story* (above n. 9).

24 Oral communication. We thank our colleague for his help on this question.

25 A. R. Millard, *Assyrians and Arameans*, *Iraq* 45 (1983), 101–108.

26 See on this point Na'aman, *Jacob Story* (above, n. 9). Note however, that Haran had already been »prominent« in the last third of the eighth century and during the seventh century BCE.

of Israel. This theory may be strengthened by the observation that Hosea 12 mentions Aram but not Haran, an observation that adds to the difficulties to date Hosea 12 in the Persian Period.

The vision that Jacob has in Bethel in Gen 28 is also compatible with Mesopotamian religious concepts:²⁷ the gate of heaven, a sort of a ramp or zigurat, a deity in heaven and a deity standing next to the worshipper. Perhaps the 8th century text still distinguished between El sitting in heaven and Yhwh the personal god of Jacob standing next to him (for this concept see also the original form of Deut 32,8, where Yhwh appears as a son of El²⁸). In this case, one could argue that the story that makes Jacob the founder of the »El sanctuary« at Bethel represents at the same time the introduction of Yhwh in this sanctuary. There is quite a consensus about the fact that major parts of the Yhwh speech in Gen 28,13–15 are part of a later redaction, so that Yhwh appeared only silently in a vision, or more probably, that he introduced himself and provided divine assistance (v. 13* and v. 15*), quite similar to Neo-Assyrian divine oracles.²⁹

Behind this 8th century Jacob-Laban narrative one can detect an older, perhaps pre-monarchic tradition – the earliest Jacob narrative. According to Gen 31,45–54*, the conclusion of a treaty between Jacob and Laban puts the bor-

27 V. A. Hurowitz, *Babylon in Bethel. New Light on Jacob's Dream*, in: S. W. Holloway (ed.), *Orientalism, Assyriology and the Bible*, 2006, 436–448. For illustrations of the theme of a minor god leading a human being to an enthroned deity see Othmar Keel, *Die Welt der altorientalischen Bildsymbolik und das Alte Testament. Am Beispiel der Psalmen*, 1980³, 18, n.9, 179, n. 272. N. Na'aman, *Does Archaeology Really Deserve the Status of A »High Court« in Biblical and Historical Research?*, in: B. E. J. H. Becking/L. L. Grabbe (eds.), *Between Evidence and Ideology, Oudtestamentische Studiën 59*, 2010, 165–183, opted for the Babylonian period as the background for this tradition; but the possibility that »transferring traditions of Babylon to Bethel occurred earlier than the days of Neo-Babylonian domination of the world«, during the reigns of Sennacherib or Esarhaddon (Hurowitz, *Babylon in Bethel*, 447) undermines Na'aman's argument; see I. Finkelstein, *Archaeology as High Court in Ancient Israelite History: A Reply to Nadav Na'aman*, *JHS 10* (2010), Article 19.

28 According to a reconstruction based on LXX* and a fragment from Qumran this verse states that when El Elyon created the world he gave one people to each of his (seventy?) sons: »and Yhwh received Jacob/Israel«; cf. Th. Römer, *L'Ancien Testament est-il monothéiste?*, in: G. Emery/P. Gisel (eds.), *Le Christianisme est-il un monothéisme?*, *Lieux théologiques 36*, 2001, 72–92; N. Wyatt, *The Seventy Sons of Athirat, the Nations of the World, Deuteronomy 32.6B, 8–9 and the Myth of the Divine Election*, in: R. Rezetko/T. H. Lim/W. B. Aucker (eds.), *Reflection and Refraction. Studies in Biblical Historiography in Honour of A. Graeme Auld*, *VT.S 113*, 2007, 547–556.

29 See similarly Blum, *Jacob Tradition* (above n. 8), 197, n 39. Neo-Assyrian oracles in which Ishtar (or another deity) presents herself and promises her assistance to the king can foster this reconstruction.

der between them in the pasture areas in the northeastern sector of the Israelite Gilead;³⁰ the »Land of Kedem« (people of the east) is to be found there. The account on the heap of stones (*ga'ed* = cairn) built by Jacob (Gen 31,48), is probably an etiological story (which may have been influenced by the idea of the Assyrian *kuduru* border stones), aimed to explain a geographical feature in the Gilead, a feature which was in one way or the other connected to the reality of the border between Israelite and Aramean populations that lived in proximity in northern Transjordan. Locating the arena of this narrative is important for understanding its background.

A place named Mizpah, apparently located near the *ga'ed*, plays an important role in the story since an etiology of the name is given (Gen 31,49). It should probably be identified in or near Tell el-Masfa (and the village of Suf) overlooking the upper valley of the Jabbok River, several kilometres northwest of Jerash. The small site, which may preserve the ancient name, is located in a commanding spot – it is one of the highest mounds in the Levant (ca. 1100 m above sea level). This fits the name (a place overlooking its surroundings), as well as the idea of a place which can be seen from afar and hence serves as a territorial marker. This Mizpah seems to be the most eastern Israelite place in the Gilead, bordering on the territory of Aramean *Lidbir*, probably to be identified with el-Husn south of Irbid.³¹ The other important identifiable site mentioned in the Jacob cycle is Penuel, located in the lower ravine of the Jabbok.³² Indeed, the tradition regarding the foundation of the temple at Penuel possibly also belongs to this older layer of the Jacob tradition³³

30 See already O. Eißfeldt, *Das Alte Testament im Licht der safatenischen Inschriften*, ZDMG 104 (1954), 88–118. For the Israelite territories in the Gilead see I. Finkelstein/I. Koch/O. Lipschits, *The Biblical Gilead: Observations on Identifications Geographic Divisions and Territorial History*, UF 43 (2012), 131–159.

31 On Mizpah of Gilead see Finkelstein/Koch/Lipschits, *ibid.* and references to previous research therein. The question of the relation between this Mizpah and Mizpah of the Jephthah story in Judges (10,17; 11,11.29.34) is beyond the scope of this article.

32 *Ibid.*

33 The story of Gen 32,23–32 is probably not older than the eighth century, when Jacob became (under Jeroboam II?) the ancestor of Israel, so that he had to change his name. The story focuses indeed on this new name, and the etiology of Penuel is not necessary its main concern. It may therefore be possible that this etiology was added because of a memory of a link between the *Bene Ya'aqob* and Penuel. Does this mean that the Jacob clan worshipped the deity El? See also K. Van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel: Continuity and Change in the Forms of Religious Life*, 1996, 300, who suggested that the Jacob traditions were connected with El and that the Exodus ones were related to Yhwh. Traditional older scholarship often emphasized the numerous mentions of El in the Patriarchal narratives, although with an untenable

(seemingly also Succoth – if one takes Gen 33,17³⁴) and perhaps also Mahanaim.³⁵ All this seems to show that the earliest Jacob traditions were local to the Israelite territory in the Gilead, possibly, to the early core-area of the territory named Gilead – in the Jabbok and south of it;³⁶ this area covers no more than ca. 500 km². The stories related to this »patriarch« and his territory were probably first memorized and commemorated at a sanctuary of El in Penuel.

The realities depicted in this earliest layer in the Jacob tradition should be dated in the Iron Age, probably before the Iron IIB (below), when the settlement (to differ from political) border between Israelites and Arameans in this region was formed. This situation seems to best fit the late Iron I or early Iron IIA, that is, the late 11th or 10th century BCE. Note that the clash over Ramoth-gilead in the later days of the Omrides (I Reg 22; II Reg 8,28–29) and the fact that in the time of Jeroboam II Lidbir is considered a well-established Aramean city (Am 6,11–14) seem indeed to show that the ethnic border in the Gilead had been stabilized before the 9th century BCE. In this early phase of its cultural history the Jacob tradition – in which Jacob was not yet the ancestor of »Israel«, but of a group called *Bene Ya'aqob*³⁷ – did not exist yet in a written form (more below).

Had this been the case, how to explain the association of Jacob with Bethel which should also be understood, as shown above, on an Iron Age background? This tradition may date to the first half of the 8th century BCE, when Bethel served as a highly important temple of the Northern Kingdom (Am 7,13), probably parallel to – or second only to – that of Samaria (below). This is hinted by the archaeology of Beitin. The site prospered mainly in the Iron I and the Iron IIB; evidence of activity there in the early Iron IIA and in the Neo-Babylonian-Persian periods is lacking and activity in the late Iron IIA was weak at best.³⁸ Although the

historical explanation, that the Patriarchs venerated in the beginning an unnamed »god of the father«, who was identified with El or a specific manifestation of the major Canaanite deity.

34 Gen 33,17 suggests a kind of foundation of Succoth by Jacob, since he is giving the name to this place as he does for Bethel and Mahanaim.

35 Again, the story in Gen 32,2ff. is not older than the Neo-Assyrian period; see Th. Römer, *Genèse 32,2–22: préparations d'une rencontre*, in: J.-D. Macchi/Th. Römer (eds.), *Jacob. Commentaire à plusieurs voix de Gen. 25–36. Mélanges offerts à Albert de Pury*, *Le Monde de la Bible* 44, 2001, 181–196, with additional bibliography. In this passage Mahanaim is part of a word-play on mahan/im (»camp/s«) that occurs very frequently. But one may argue that the author from the 8th or 7th century knew about the link between Jacob and Mahanaim, or, the link between the two neighboring sites of Penuel and Mahanaim in the ravine of the Jabbok.

36 Finkelstein/Koch/Lipschits, *ibid* (n. 30).

37 De Pury, *Jacob Story* (above n. 19).

38 I. Finkelstein/L. Singer-Avitz, *Reevaluating Bethel*, *ZDPV* 125 (2009), 33–48, contra scholars who, based on text evaluation only, put much emphasis on the role of Bethel in the

possibility that a Jacob-Bethel tradition also originate from the Iron I or early Iron IIA cannot be brushed aside,³⁹ it seems to us that the institutionalization of the Jacob-Bethel connection better fits the days of Jeroboam II (788–747 BCE). In his time, as part of the reorganization of the cult of the kingdom, the old Jacob tradition was »imported« to Bethel, or (in the case that it had already been known west of the Jordan before) promoted there. The well-known account in I Reg 12,29 dates the construction of the shrines in Bethel and Dan to the days of Jeroboam I. Yet, the archaeological evidence from both Dan and Bethel puts the reality behind this verse in the days of Jeroboam II⁴⁰ – both sites were not inhabited in the early Iron IIA – the days of Jeroboam I,⁴¹ and Dan was probably not ruled by Israel until ca. 800 BCE.⁴²

This fits the analysis of the text of I Reg 12, which conserves in verses 1–20 and 25 an old, pre-dtr. tradition, according to which Jeroboam I constructed Shechem and Penuel, whereas the story about the golden calves in Bethel and Dan is attributed to one or more dtr. redactors,⁴³ who perhaps wanted to put the construction of Bethel and Dan in the very beginning as the »original sin« of the Northern Kingdom. This literary analysis confirms the distinction between Penuel – possi-

Babylonian and Persian periods, e.g., J. Blenkinsopp, Bethel in the Neo-Babylonian Period, in: O. Lipschits/J. Blenkinsopp (eds.), *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period*, 2003, 93–107; E. A. Knauf, Bethel: The Israelite Impact on Judean Language and Literature, in: O. Lipschits/M. Oeming (eds.), *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period*, 2006, 291–349; P. R. Davies, *The Trouble with Benjamin*, in: R. Rezetko/T. H. Lim/W. B. Aucker (eds.), *Reflection and Refraction: Studies in Biblical Historiography in Honour of A. Graeme Auld*, 93–111; Na'aman, *Does Archaeology* (above n. 27).

39 Note, for instance, the connection between the area of the Jabbok and the area of Bethel in the deeply rooted tradition about the territory ruled by the House of Saul and in the Sheshonq I list, which dates to the second half of the 10th century BCE; see I. Finkelstein, *The Last Labayu: King Saul and the Expansion of the First North Israelite Territorial Entity*, in: Y. Amit/E. Ben Zvi/I. Finkelstein/O. Lipschits (eds.), *Essays on Ancient Israel in its Near Eastern Context, A Tribute to Nadav Na'aman*, 2006, 171–187, 171–177.

40 For the same conclusion reached from the point of view of text exegesis see A. Berlejung, *Twisting Traditions: Programmatic Absence-Theology for the Northern Kingdom in I Reg 12,26–33** (The »sin of Jeroboam«), *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 35 (2009), 1–42.

41 For Dan see E. Arie, *Reconstructing the Iron Age II Strata at Tel Dan: Archaeological and Historical Implications*, *Tel Aviv* 35 (2008), 6–64; for Bethel Finkelstein/Singer-Avitz, *Reevaluating Bethel* (above n. 38).

42 I. Finkelstein, *Stages in the Territorial Expansion of the Northern Kingdom*, *VT* 61 (2011), 227–242.

43 See for instance E. Würthwein, *Die Bücher der Könige. Das erste Buch der Könige. Kapitel 1–16*, *ATD* 11,1, 1977, 150–166.

bly a memory of the importance of this place for the Gilead traditions in the early Iron IIA – and the Bethel-Dan story from the dtr. edition of the Books of Kings.

The first recording of the Jacob story in writing was seemingly undertaken during the reign of Jeroboam II in the 8th century, probably at Bethel. Apart for a single inscription of three letters (found at Khirbet Raddana and dating to the late Iron I or early Iron IIA), there is almost no evidence for writing in the hill country on both sides of the Jordan until the late Iron IIA in the second half of the 9th century. Hebrew appears for the first time on the margin of the hill country, mainly in the urban centers of Gath and Rehob, in the 9th century, and in the heartland of the Hebrew kingdoms even later. The first widespread scribal activity in Israel is known from the Samaria Ostraca and the Kuntillet 'Ajrud inscriptions, both dating to the early Iron IIB in the first half of the 8th century BCE.⁴⁴ Interestingly, both are connected to the state administration at Samaria and at least one (Kuntillet 'Ajrud) also to cult related to Samaria.

The »migration« of the Jacob traditions from the Gilead to the central highlands west of the Jordan and its promotion at Bethel raises the question of the tradition regarding Jacob's burial place at Shechem (Gen 33,18–20).⁴⁵ This story presents a problem: There is some logic in seeking an early memory regarding a tomb of the hero/patriarch (and a related shrine?),⁴⁶ but the present wording of v. 18 seems late (Paddan-aram belongs to P-contexts, as does the expression »land of Canaan«).⁴⁷ The same holds true for v. 19: as it stands now, the mention of Hamor prepares the transition to Gen 34,⁴⁸ and the term »kesitah« (money, sheep?) appears only in two late texts: Jos 24,32 and Job 42,11. Tentatively one could try to reconstruct the older tradition – not necessarily in the same words – as follows (underlined: late reworking):

18 ויבא יעקב [שלם] עיר שכם [אשר בארץ כנען בבאנו מפרץ ארם] ויחן את פני העיר.
 19 ויקן את חלקת השדה אשר נטה שם אהלו [מיד בני חמור אבי שכם במאה קשיטה].
 20 ויצב שם מזבח ויקרא לו אל אלהי ישראל.

⁴⁴ On all this see I. Finkelstein/B. Sass, *The West Semitic Alphabetic Inscriptions Late Bronze II to Iron IIA: Archaeological Context, Distribution and Chronology*, HBAI 2, 149–220.

⁴⁵ His association with the Cave of Machpelah in Gen 49,30; 50,13 is clearly late in date – see below.

⁴⁶ A. de Pury, *Promesse divine et légende culturelle dans le cycle de Jacob*. Tome I et II, *Etudes Bibliques*, 1975, 562.

⁴⁷ E. Blum, *Genesis 33,12–20: Die Wege trennen sich*, in: Macchi/ Römer (eds.), *Jacob*, 227–238, 237.

⁴⁸ Perhaps the buying of a place also alludes to Gen 23 (P or later). In this case, the entire verse 19 would be late.

The note in v. 20 would confirm the memory of the veneration of an »El« deity by the Jacob clan – at Penuel, Bethel and probably at Shechem too. The core of the Shechem tradition should in this case be seen as part of the »importation« of the Jacob narrative from the Gilead and its promotion in the highlands west of the Jordan between Shechem and Bethel. This too may fit quite well the time of Jeroboam II and his re-organization of the cult in the Northern Kingdom. According to our discussion of Gen 28,10–22* above the first version of Jacob's discovery of Bethel probably aimed to combine the original El veneration with the worship of Yhwh.

The fact that west of the Jordan the Jacob traditions are restricted to the southern part of the North Israelite highlands – between Shechem and Bethel – raises the question of the traditions that were located in the northern part of the central highlands, between Shechem and the Jezreel Valley, especially in and around Samaria.

The inscriptions and drawings of Kuntillet 'Ajrud point to strong involvement of an Israelite monarch there, probably Jeroboam II.⁴⁹ Most important is the mention in the inscriptions of Yhwh of Teman and Yhwh of Samaria. Cult at Kuntillet 'Ajrud seems to have been devoted to Yhwh of Teman, that is, Yhwh of the southern arid zones and Asherah, his consort according to some, his temple according to others.⁵⁰ Yhwh of Samaria – who may have also been worshiped at Kuntillet 'Ajrud, should probably be understood as the patron or protective deity of the capital of the Northern Kingdom (compare Yhwh of Jerusalem in the Beit Lei inscription⁵¹). The Kuntillet 'Ajrud Inscription 3.1 (also 3.8?) may, in fact, refer to a

49 For instance, N. Na'aman, The Inscriptions of Kuntillet 'Ajrud through the Lens of Historical Research, UF 43 (2012), 1–43; T. Ornan, The Drawings from Kuntillet 'Ajrud Reconsidered, in S. Ahituv/E. Eshel/Z. Meshel/T. Ornan (eds.), To Yahweh Teiman and his Ashera, the Inscriptions and Drawings from Kuntillet 'Ajrud, in press.

50 The case of Ashera is still disputed. An important number of scholars argue that Asherah (or the »Goddess«) was the consort of Yhwh (S. M. Olyan, Ashera and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel, SBL.MS 34, 1988; J. M. Hadley, Yahweh and »his Ashera«: Archeological and Textual Evidence for the Cult of the Goddess, in: W. Dietrich/M. A. Klopfenstein [eds.], Ein Gott allein? JHWH-Verehrung und biblischer Monotheismus im Kontext der israelitischen und altorientalischen Religionsgeschichte, OBO 139, 1994, 235–268; C. Uehlinger, Anthropomorphic Cult Statuary in Iron Age Palestine and the Search for Yahweh's Cult Images, in: K. van der Toorn [ed.], The Image and the Book. Iconic Cults, Aniconism, and the Rise of the Book Religion in Israel and the Ancient Near East, CBET 21, 1997, 97–156). B. Sass in a forthcoming article in *Transeuphratène* (On epigraphic Hebrew 'ŠR and *'ŠRH, and on Biblical Asherah) takes up an older suggestion, based on extra-biblical evidence, that *asherah* was the name for Yhwh's temple, that became deified.

51 A. Lemaire, Prières en temps de crise: les inscriptions de Khirbet Beit Lei, RB 83 (1976), 558–568.

temple of Yhwh at Samaria,⁵² a temple that may also be hinted at in Hos 8,6 and in I Reg 16,32, where the original text spoke of a »house of Yhwh« at Samaria.⁵³ The possible connection of Kuntillet 'Ajrud with the Exodus and desert wandering accounts⁵⁴ raises the possibility that the Exodus tradition was associated with this temple.

It seems, then, that the Northern Kingdom had two narratives of origin,⁵⁵ or charter myths:⁵⁶ the Jacob Cycle and the Exodus-Wandering narrative. Their sources can be traced to the early days of the Northern kingdom, if not previously,⁵⁷ but they seem to have been »institutionalized« in the first half of the 8th century, in the days of Jeroboam II. This monarch may have tried to centralize the cult of the Northern Kingdom in official state shrines, an endeavour probably aimed at establishing tight control of the kingdom's bureaucracy over the cult and revenues that emerged from the temples. At least two of the central shrines were related to one of the foundation myths of Israel:⁵⁸ The local Gilead hero Jacob was

52 O. Keel/C. Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses and Images of Gods in Ancient Israel*, 1998, 228; M. Dijkstra, *El, the God of Israel – Israel, the People of YHWH: On the Origins of Ancient Israelite Yahwism*, in: B. Becking/M. Dijkstra/M. C. A. Korpel/J. H. Vriezen (eds.), *Only One God? Monotheism in Ancient Israel and the Veneration of the Goddess Asherah*, 2001, 81–126, 116; K. Schmid, *The Old Testament: A Literary History*, 2010, 53.

53 M. Köckert, *YHWH in the Northern and Southern Kingdoms*, in: R. G. Kratz/H. Spieckermann (eds.), *One God – One Cult – One Nation. Archaeological and Biblical Perspectives*, BZAW 405, 2010, 357–394.

54 Na'aman, *Inscriptions of Kuntillet 'Ajrud* (above n. 49); I. Finkelstein, *The Wilderness Narrative and Itineraries and the Evolution of the Exodus Tradition*, in: T. E. Levy (ed.), *Out of Egypt: Israel's Exodus between Text and Memory, History and Imagination*, in press.

55 Term of E. Blum, *Jacob Tradition* (above n. 8), 207.

56 Van der Toorn, *Family Religion* (above n. 33); R. Albertz, *Exodus: Liberation History against Charter Myths*, in: J. W. van Henten/A. W. J. Hautepein (eds.), *Religious Identity and the Invention of Tradition* (NOSTER Conference, Soesterberg 1999), 2001, 128–143.

57 For possible scenarios for the early history of the Exodus tradition see, e.g., D. B. Redford, *An Egyptological Perspective on the Exodus Narrative*, in: A. F. Rainey (ed.), *Egypt, Israel, Sinai: Archaeological and Historical Relationships in the Biblical Period*, 2009, 137–161; N. Na'aman, *The Exodus Story: Between Historical Memory and Historiographical Composition*, *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 11, 39–69; Th. Römer, *L'invention de Dieu, La Bibliothèque du XXI^e siècle*, 2014; Finkelstein, *Wilderness Narrative* (above n. 54). Note that there is no hint to connect these myths to the Jezreel Valley and the Galilee territories of the Northern Kingdom, which may hint that they crystallized before the expansion of Israel to these areas starting in the early Iron IIA. On this see Finkelstein, *Stages* (above n. 42).

58 Other countryside shrines were eradicated. This is evident at Megiddo: in the late Iron IIA Megiddo had at least two, if not three or four domestic shrines—connected to different quarters of the town. Other modest countryside shrines are known at Tel Amal near Beth-shean and

now venerated in the temple of El at Bethel and probably also connected with Yhwh, while Exodus was promoted in the Temple of Yhwh at Samaria.⁵⁹ There is no way to know if another tradition was revered in the temple of Dan, which was also erected at that time.⁶⁰ These shrines – at Bethel and Samaria – were probably the places where the early North Israelite traditions were first put in writing. This situation is seemingly hinted at by the author of Hosea 12, a supporter of the Exodus tradition only as Israel's foundation myth, who criticizes the Jeroboam II promotion of Jacob by presenting a negative view about the Patriarch as a trickster.⁶¹ (This motif exists also in the Jacob-Laban narrative as we have it in Genesis, although in a more neutral or even positive way.)

It is difficult to reconstruct the precise framework of the older Jacob tradition – from the early phases of the Iron Age. Yet, the geography of the account gives some clues regarding the »Haftpunkte« of this tradition, one of which was probably Penuel. At that stage, the deity involved was possibly El, as is still reflected in certain passages of the Genesis narrative. The link between Jacob and Yhwh was possibly made in the 8th century narrative. It is difficult to know when Yhwh appeared in the North. The Elijah stories reflect a competition between Yhwh and a Phoenician Baal. If there is a historical kernel behind the putsch of Jehu it is possible that he made Yhwh the tutelary deity of the Israelite kings and that Jeroboam II was the one who fostered the Yhwh cult in Israel. The names Ahaziah and Joram given to members of the Omride dynasty before Jehu attest however that Yhwh was already worshipped in the palace circles under the Omrides. The »Jehu revolution« should then be understood as an attempt to eradicate the veneration of Phoenician ba'alim and the installation of Yhwh as the only tutelary deity of the monarchy which was institutionalized by Jeroboam II.

at Taanach in the Jezreel Valley south of Megiddo. These local cult places disappeared in the early 8th century. At Megiddo no shrine survived this transition. On this see N. Na'aman, *The Abandonment of Cult Places in the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah as Acts of Cult Reform*, UF 34 (2002), 585–602.

⁵⁹ See Van der Toorn, *Family Religion* (above n. 33), 300.

⁶⁰ Arie, *Reconstructing* (above n. 41).

⁶¹ At the same time, Hosea is often polemical against the »calf« of Samaria, which according to the dtr. account of I Reg 12 was also worshipped in relation to Exodus in Bethel and Dan. The situation is therefore somewhat confusing.

IV The Esau Narrative

An unresolved problem in the reconstruction of the formation of the Jacob Cycle is the relation between Jacob and Esau/Edom. If Esau was from the beginning a personification of Edom/Seir, which is a plausible assumption, then we have three possibilities to connect Edom and Jacob.

According to the first, the difficult relations between Edom and »Israel« presupposes the »theological« concept of Israel after the Jacob traditions had come to Judah and the South has taken over the term »Israel« as an expression for the people of Yhwh. In this case the Jacob/Esau stories were added to the Jacob narrative at the earliest in the late seventh century or better in the sixth century before or after the fall of Jerusalem; note the animosity to Edom in the end-days of Judah,⁶² and that there is no clear historical context for (difficult) relations between Israel and Edomites in the time of the Northern Kingdom.⁶³

A second possibility would be to relate the conflict with the Edomites to earlier days of the Jacob tradition, focusing on the observation that Yhwh was originally a southern or even an Edomite deity.⁶⁴ Deut 33,2 has Yhwh come from Seir, and Hab 3,3 (El) from Teman.⁶⁵ This would mean that the conflicts and reconciliation between the brothers Jacob and Esau reflect the adoption of an Edomite or southern deity by the clan of Jacob perhaps through the mediation of a *Shasu* group. But this is highly speculative.

A third option is presented by the graffiti from Kuntillet Ajrud, which can be confidentially dated to the first half of the 8th century BCE.⁶⁶ They provide evidence that at this site Yhwh was addressed to as the »Yhwh of Samaria«, and the »Yhwh of Teman« (with article), so that a relation between Jacob and Esau/

⁶² See various articles in: Diana Vikander Edelman (ed.), *You Shall not Abhor an Edomite for He is Your Brother*, 1995.

⁶³ N. Na'aman, *Jacob Story* (above, n. 9).

⁶⁴ J. R. Bartlett, *Edom and the Edomites*, JSOT.S 77, 1989; Römer, *L'invention* (above, n. 57).

⁶⁵ According to Henrik Pfeiffer, *Jahwes Kommen von Süden: Jdc 5, Hab 3, Dtn 33 und Ps 68 in ihrem literatur- und theologiegeschichtlichen Umfeld*, FRLANT 211, 2005, the biblical tradition of Yhwh coming from the south is an exilic invention aimed to delocalize Yhwh after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple (see also his article: *Die Herkunft Jahwes und ihre Zeugen*, *Berliner theologische Zeitschrift* 30 (2013), 44–61). This is not very convincing as it is hard to imagine Judean scribes inventing a »southern« Yhwh. For a southern origin of Yhwh see among many others M. Leuenberger, *Jhwhs Herkunft aus dem Süden. Archäologische Befunde – biblische Überlieferungen – historische Korrelationen*, ZAW 122 (2010), 1–19.

⁶⁶ For the radiocarbon evidence see summary in I. Finkelstein/E. Piasezky, *The Date of Kuntillet 'Ajrud: The 14C Perspective*, *Tel Aviv* 35 (2008), 175–185; Boaretto, in a lecture at Tel Aviv University, January 2013.

Edom (Teman) could also make sense in the context of the 8th century BCE. In this case, the story of the reconciliation and separation between Jacob and Esau/Edom could reflect the »transfer« of Yhwh from Edom to »Israel«. In this way the 8th century Jacob story would be an acknowledgement of a common veneration of Yhwh (in different manifestations). It is noteworthy that after the encounter with Esau, Jacob is pretending that he would join Esau in Seir (Gen 33,14–15), but then settles in Succoth and Shechem.

Of course, a late date of the Jacob-Esau story cannot be excluded, but it is difficult to disconnect Esau from Aram⁶⁷ and Haran, that is, from the 7th or 6th century BCE. Finally, the fact that Abraham has two competing sons as does Isaac probably suggests that the redactors of the Abraham narrative were aware of the Jacob-Esau tradition.

V The Merging of the Jacob and Abraham Stories

There is quite a consensus about the idea that the early Jacob traditions were brought to the South only after the destruction of Samaria in 722.⁶⁸ It is only from this *terminus a quo* on, that they could have been combined with the stories about the Southern patriarch Abraham. And there is indeed historical logic to imagine the merging of the Jacob and Abraham stories in Judah post 720 and before 586 – possibly in line with a »pan-Israelite« ideology regarding territory and people, which may have started at the time of Josiah. The new demographic situation in

67 A consensus exists on the fact that the expression *Padan Aram*, that designates Northern Mesopotamia, occurs in the book of Genesis only in P or later texts (Gen 25,20; 31,18; 33,18; 35,9,26; 46,18; cf. also *Padan* in 28,2,5–7; 48,7). For the meaning of the expression see D. Jericke, *Die Ortsangaben im Buch Genesis. Ein historisch-topographischer und literarisch-topographischer Kommentar*, FRLANT 248, 2013, 180.

68 In the classical Documentary Hypothesis the link existed already in the work of the 10th century Yahwist or even earlier. This construction presupposes the idea of a »United Monarchy«, which, as far as we can judge, is a theological construct of the author/s of the early layer of the so-called Deuteronomistic History; for the biblical material see J. C. Gertz, *Konstruierte Erinnerung. Alttestamentliche Historiographie im Spiegel von Archäologie und literarhistorischer Kritik am Fallbeispiel des salomonischen Königums*, *Berliner Theologische Zeitschrift* 21 (2004), 3–29; for archaeology see the summary in I. Finkelstein/N. A. Silberman, *David and Solomon: In Search of the Bible's Sacred Kings and the Roots of the Western Tradition*, 2006; I. Finkelstein, *A Great United Monarchy? Archaeological and Historical Perspectives*, in: Kratz/ Spieckermann (eds.), *One God* (above, n. 53), 3–28. It also presupposes a high degree of literacy, which did not exist in the 10th century BCE – B. Sass, *The Alphabet in the Turn of the Millennium: The West Semitic Alphabet ca. 1150–850 BCE, the Antiquity of the Arabian, Greek and Phrygian Alphabets*, 2005; Finkelstein/Sass, *West Semitic* (above n. 44).

Judah – of a nation composed of mixed Southern and Northern groups – made it necessary to strengthen the coherence of this »united« monarchy⁶⁹ by creating one story that combined Southern and the Northern traditions. The merging of the traditions was made from the beginning in written form, since it was a deliberate attempt to impose a new »official«, overarching Patriarchal History. Indeed, the post 720 BCE years in Judah – and especially the late 7th and early 6th centuries – are already characterized by widespread use of writing as a medium of administration and communication.⁷⁰

In this new patriarchal »history«, the reality on the ground – dominance of Israel over Judah during the time of their existence side by side – was reversed; Judah (Abraham and Isaac) was put in the lead of the unified tradition, and Jacob was placed last. The Abraham story also »vampirized« traditions from the Jacob narratives, such as the itinerary in Gen 12,4–9, the construction of cult places (more below), and maybe also the idea of two sons who have to separate. The goal was to subordinate the Jacob stories to the Abraham ones, in essence, to subordinate Israel (which was no more) to Judah. This merging of the traditions was not done in one step; it must have been a long process that had probably started in the 7th century and continued until the Persian period. The notion that the link was made quite late is supported by the fact that the passages mentioning the three patriarchs together outside the book of Genesis are late theological summaries from the Babylonian and Persian Periods.⁷¹ In the book of Genesis, the unification of the Patriarchal narratives was effectuated by different redactors with different strategies: one for instance was the repetition of divine promises of the land and offspring to the three ancestors.⁷²

It has often been observed that in the unified narrative the Southern traditions »react« to the northern ones: In Gen 12,5–9, Abraham too goes to Bethel and Shechem.⁷³ He »gets out« of Judah to master the entire hill country and to claim

69 Finkelstein/Silberman, *Temple and Dynasty* (above, n. 15).

70 Jamieson-Drake, *Scribes and Schools* (above n. 15).

71 See already R. J. Tournay, *Genèse de la triade «Abraham-Isaac-Jacob»*, RB 103 (1996), 321–336.

72 R. Kessler, *Die Querverweise im Pentateuch. Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen der expliziten Querverbindungen innerhalb des vorpriesterlichen Pentateuchs*, 1972; Rendtorff, *Problem* (above n. 4); M. Köckert, *Vätergott und Väterverheißungen. Eine Auseinandersetzung mit Albrecht Alt und seinen Erben*, FRLANT 142, 1988.

73 Note that in Gen 12 the places where Abraham worships are »near«: near Bethel and near Shechem. This could be a strategy to show that even before centralization of the cult in the Jerusalem Temple the venerated patriarch did not worship in »illegitimate« places, especially not in Bethel, so despised in dtr. ideology.

it for the Judahite monarchy or the Judahites. Significantly, Bethel and Shechem probably symbolize here the Jacob traditions (places further north are not mentioned), which supports the notion of an ancient link of Jacob to Shechem, possibly around a revered tomb. The question is in which situation the emphasis on Bethel in Gen 12,8 fits. The passage is nowadays often considered to be »exilic« or later,⁷⁴ but at that time the site was not occupied, or was very sparsely inhabited.⁷⁵ Interestingly, Abraham is not »connected« to Penuel (unlike Bethel) because the merging of the stories occurred when this place was not an issue anymore; the Gilead was lost with the offensive of Rezin of Damascus in the second half of the 8th century,⁷⁶ and did not become a concern again until Hasmonean times.

The visit of Jacob to Mamre (Gen 35,27) probably belongs to the same strategy – to strengthen the parallels between the two ancestors and the superiority of Judah over Israel. It is also plausible that in order to unify the patriarchal family the Jacob burial place was »moved« from Shechem to Hebron.⁷⁷ Interestingly, in the New Testament, the book of Acts seems still to presuppose a link with Shechem, since the burial place of Abraham is said to have been purchased there (Acts 7,16).

VI The priestly Jacob narrative

There is quite a consensus about the extent of the priestly material in the Jacob narrative:⁷⁸ Gen 25,19–20 ... 25,26b; 26,34–35; 27,46; 28,1–9 ... (28,24,28b; 29 ... 30,22⁷⁹); 31,18*; 35,6a,9–15,22b–29; 46,3–4; 47,27–28; 50,12–13.⁸⁰ Contrary to the Abraham story, where P can be reconstructed as a coherent narrative strand,

⁷⁴ For instance E. Blum, *Die Komposition der Vätergeschichte*, WMANT 57, 1984, 462.

⁷⁵ Finkelstein/Singer-Avitz, *Reevaluating Bethel* (above n. 38). Blenkinsopp, *Bethel* (above n. 38), argued that the sanctuary of Bethel played a major role during the Babylonian period. This claim is contradicted by the archaeological evidence.

⁷⁶ N. Na'aman, *Rezin of Damascus and the Land of Gilead*, ZDPV 111 (1995), 105–117.

⁷⁷ For more details see our article on Abraham: Finkelstein/Römer, *Comments* (above, n. 10).

⁷⁸ See for instance the synopsis in P. P. Jenson, *Graded Holiness. A Key to the Priestly Conception of the World*, JSOTSup 106, 1992, 220–221, where he compares the reconstructions of P by Noth, Elliger, Lohfink, Weimar and Holzinger. Except some minor differences they are identical with the reconstruction of Theodor Nöldeke in 1869, summarized by Blum, *Jacob Tradition* (above n. 8), 190–191.

⁷⁹ According to Jenson, only Holzinger attributes these verses to P.

⁸⁰ This enumeration skips references to the Joseph story that are claimed to be P, which are perhaps post-P.

the priestly version of Jacob's adventures contains substantial gaps. Either P was composed in order to immediately integrate the older Jacob narrative,⁸¹ or P was not much interested in Jacob, and considered him only as a genealogical link between Abraham with whom Yhwh concludes a covenant (Gen 17) and the people of Israel. According to P this link is constituted through the divine revelation to Moses (Ex 6);⁸² note that P (for the first time?) connects the Jacob and the Exodus story. For this reason P was not entirely conserved when combined with the older Jacob material. Similar to the case of Ishmael, P wanted to downplay the conflict between Jacob and Esau, so that his travel to Laban is not the result of a flight but a wish of his mother who wants him to get married inside the family.⁸³ This indicates a Jacob story which already contained the relation to Esau. The only other episode P was interested in was the theophany in Bethel that he rewrites in Gen 25. Interestingly P transfers the change of Jacob's name from Penuel to Bethel, and as observed by Blum, omits the explanation of the name of Bethel and transforms the *massebah* into a »memorial of the divine speech.«⁸⁴ In a way P still acknowledges the »El tradition« related to the Patriarchs in using the term »El Shadday« for the deity that appears to Abraham and Jacob (Gen 17;1; 28,3; 35,1). This use of a deity, worshipped in Arabia at the time when P wrote, is an acknowledgement of different »Els« in the older Patriarchal narratives;⁸⁵ P identifies of course Yhwh and El Shadday by the idea of three steps of divine revelation (Ex 6,2–3). Apparently P shares the Judean viewpoint by transferring Jacob's tomb to Machpelah (Gen 50,12–13).

VII Post-priestly additions to the Jacob narrative

The P texts are not the latest additions to the Jacob story. It was still reworked after the combination of the older story with the P account. The following passages belong to the later inserts.

The presentation of Jacob's children as the twelve tribes of Israel is a late construction that has replaced an older account about Jacob's children in Gen

⁸¹ As claimed by Blum, *Jacob Tradition* (above n. 8), 192.

⁸² A. de Pury, *Genèse 12–36*, in: Th. Römer/J.-D. Macchi/Ch. Nihan (eds.), *Introduction à l'Ancien Testament*, *Le Monde de la Bible* 49, 2009, 2nd ed., 217–238, 226.

⁸³ Interestingly, according to P, Esau marries two Hittite women (26,34–35; cf. 27,46) as Ishmael marries an Egyptian woman (21,21).

⁸⁴ Blum, *Jacob Tradition* (above n. 8), 192.

⁸⁵ E. A. Knauf, *Shadday*, *DDD*, 1999, 2nd ed., 749–753, 751.

29–30.⁸⁶ To this construction belongs also the account of Benjamin's birth and Rachel's death; the late origin of this passage has recently been demonstrated by N. Na'aman.⁸⁷ Jacob's prayer before his encounter with Esau in Gen 32,10–13 is a post-dtr. addition that transforms Jacob into a pious Jew (see the parallels in Neh 9 and Dan 9) and corrects the older account.⁸⁸ The composite story about the massacre in Shechem in Gen 34 is also post-priestly, transforming Jacob's traditional link with this place into a problematic one, in which Jacob does not play the major role (reflecting anti-Samaritan ideology?). As Macchi has shown, the story focusing on the violent behaviour of Simeon and Levi prepare the tribal sentences in Gen 49 and the exaltation of Judah in this text,⁸⁹ and may belong to a pro-Davidic redaction in the Persian period (cf. Gen 49,10). The passage of Gen 35,1–7* was deliberately placed before the priestly account in 35,9 ff. It introduces the theme of the renouncement of foreign gods⁹⁰ in Shechem that is taken up in Jos 24. Therefore this passage is probably part of a »Hexateuch redaction« that ended with Jos 24.⁹¹ It may even have been inserted as a response to Gen 34 in order to show that Shechem is (also) the place of the true worship of the god of Jacob and Israel.⁹²

VIII Summary

The combination of archaeology, geographical considerations and biblical scholarship has enabled us to retrace the formation of the Jacob tradition from the early Iron Age to the middle or end of the Persian period. The Jacob narrative is probably one of the oldest origin traditions conserved in the Hebrew Bible. It

86 Ch. Levin, *Das System der zwölf Stämme Israels*, in: J. A. Emerton (ed.), *Congress Volume*, Paris 1992, VTS 61, 1995, 163–178 = *idem.*, *Fortschreibungen: gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament*, BZAW 316, 2002, 111–123.

87 Above, n. 9. See also in a different perspective B. J. Diebner, *Rachels Niederkunft bei Betlehem und die judäische Vereinnahmung der israelitischen Königstradition*, *Dielheimer Blätter zum Alten Testament und seiner Rezeption in der Alten Kirche* 26 (1989/90), 48–57.

88 For details see Römer, *Genèse* 32,2–22 (above n. 35), 186–187 and 191 with more bibliography.

89 J.-D. Macchi, *Les interprétations conflictuelles d'une narration (Genèse 34,1–35,5; 49,5–7)*, in: G. J. Brooke/J.-D. Kaestli (eds.), *Narrativity in Biblical and Related Texts*, BETL 149, 2000, 3–15.

90 According to U. Becker, *Jakob in Bet-El und Sichem*, in: Anselm C. Hagedorn/Henrik Pfeiffer (ed.), *Die Erzväter in der biblischen Tradition (Festschrift Matthias Köckert)*, BZAW 400, 2009, 159–185, 170–171, this theme was inserted into an older itinerary.

91 Blum, *Komposition der Vätergeschichte* (above n. 74), 35–61.

92 Pace Becker, *Jakob* (above n. 90), 171, who sees here the attempt to downplay Shechem in favor of Bethel.

existed independently without relation to the Southern Patriarchs and was first a story about the origins of the Transjordanian *Bene Ya'aqob*, who were only later identified with Israel. This identification and probably also the first written version of the Jacob story, occurred in the 8th century BCE. Jacob was made the founder of the (foremost El-) sanctuaries in which Jeroboam tried to integrate Yhwh. Shortly before, and/or after the fall of Judah, and during the sixth century, Jacob was linked with Abraham, who became the first ancestor, demonstrating the Judahite/Judean superiority. P was less interested in Jacob; he reinterpreted the conflict with Esau and also the theophany in Bethel and connected the Patriarchs with the Exodus tradition. After P the role of Shechem was strengthened, probably on the background of the difficult relations between Judeans and »Samaritans«.

Abstract: The authors deploy archaeological, geographical and exegetical considerations in order to reconstruct the development of the Jacob Cycle in Genesis. The earliest material seems to have originated from the Israelite population in the Gilead in the early phases of the Iron Age; it dealt mainly with the construction of the temple of El at Penuel and with the delineation of the settlement border between Israelites and Arameans in Transjordan. In the 8th century BCE the Jacob tradition was »transported« to the west of the Jordan, to the area of Bethel-Shechem, and put in writing. This was probably done in conjunction with Jeroboam II's reorganization of the cult of the Northern Kingdom, including the promotion of the worship of Yhwh and his temples. The article then discusses later layers in the Jacob Cycle: the merging of the northern Jacob narrative with the southern Abraham and Isaac narratives, the Priestly work and post-Priestly redactions of the cycle.

Résumé: Les auteurs présentent des considérations archéologiques, géographiques et exégétiques en vue de la reconstruction du cycle de Jacob dans le livre de la Genèse. Le matériau originel semble provenir de la population israélite en Galaad, à la première époque du Fer; il concerne principalement la construction du temple d'El à Pénuel et la délimitation des frontières entre Israélites et Araméens en Transjordanie. Au 8^{ème} siècle av. n.è., la tradition de Jacob a été »transportée« à l'ouest du Jourdain, dans la région de Béthel et Sichem, où elle fut mise par écrit. Ce transfest a lieu lors de la réorganisation du culte dans le royaume du Nord sous Jéroboam II, y compris la promotion du culte de YHWH et de ses temples. Sont ensuite évoquées les couches tardives du cycle de Jacob: la combinaison du récit de Jacob avec ceux d'Abraham et d'Isaac dans le royaume du Sud, l'ouvrage sacerdotal et les rédactions post-sacerdotales du cycle.

Zusammenfassung: Die Autoren präsentieren archäologische, geographische und exegetische Überlegungen, um die Entstehung des Jakobzyklus in der Genesis zu rekonstruieren. Das früheste Material scheint von der israelitischen Bevölkerung in Gilead aus der frühen Eisenzeit zu stammen, es beschäftigte sich vor allem mit dem Bau des El-Tempels in Pnuel und mit der Beschreibung der Siedlungsgrenze zwischen den Israeliten und Aramäern in Transjordanien. Im 8. Jh. v. Chr. wurde die Jakobtradition in das Gebiet westlich des Jordans »transportiert«, in die Gegend von Bethel und Sichem, und dort schriftlich fixiert. Dies wurde wahrscheinlich im Zusammenhang der Reorganisation des Kultes im Nordreich unter Jerobeam II. veranlasst, einschließlich der Förderung der Jhwh-Verehrung und seines Tempels. Der Artikel diskutiert nachfolgend die späteren Schichten des Jakobzyklus: Die Verschmelzung der Jakoberzählung des Nordreiches mit den Abraham- und Isaakerzählungen des Südreiches, die Priesterschrift und die nachpriesterschriftlichen Redaktionen des Zyklus.