The Jacob Story and the Formation of Biblical Israel

Nadav Na'aman

Tel Aviv University

The article argues that the pre-Priestly Jacob story is mainly a unified and coherent composition that was written in Judah in about the mid-6th century BCE. It was composed as part of a larger literary-historical work that narrated the history of Israel's three ancestors and reflects the reality in the land after the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem and annexed Judah and all other neighbouring kingdoms. The patriarchal story-cycle was intended for an audience comprised of the elite and broader community of the 'New Israel'—the inhabitants of the former kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Some of the narratives are based on oral traditions whose scope and detail cannot be established, which the author augmented by consulting a few written sources and by adding various literary and ideological elements from his own creative imagination. His composition represented a major step towards generating a sense of unity among all those remaining in the land, namely the devotees of YHWH, and it shaped the image of the earliest history of Israel for all generations to come.

Research of the Patriarchal stories has undergone a dramatic transformation since the 1970s. The Documentary Hypothesis, which dominated biblical research for about a century, has gradually been replaced by a new model, according to which the narratives of the Book of Genesis and those of the Books of Exodus through Numbers grew independently of each other (Römer 1990; 1991; de Pury 1991; Schmid 2010: 1–49). According to the new paradigm, a Priestly editor operating in the post-exilic period combined for the first time the Patriarchal and Exodus narratives. In an effort to integrate the two compositions, he built a literary bridge that unified the two formerly separate story-cycles (Gertz 2000a: 380–388; Blum 2002; Kratz 2005: 248–308; Dozeman and Schmid 2006; Schmid 2010: 50–281, with earlier literature).

The suggestion that the early works of the history of Israel opened with the Exodus and that the Patriarchal stories were combined at a late stage of composition terminated the classical Documentary Hypothesis. The assumption of a North Israelite early source

(E) has been supported in recent biblical research by only a small number of scholars (e.g., Graupner 2002; Yoreh 2010); and some researchers still uphold the idea that the Yahwist was an author or editor who worked in the exilic period and segments of his work can be isolated within the narratives of the Tetrateuch (Van Seters 1992; 2006; Levin 1993; 2006: 131–141; Kratz 2005: 265–270, 274).

With the elimination of the classical Documentary Hypothesis, research into the Book of Genesis focused on the reconstruction of the stages through which the book was formed. Scholars assume that the pre-Priestly narrative blocks of the Primeval History, the Patriarchal narratives and the Joseph story were first composed as independent narrative units and later combined—in one or several stages—with the Priestly material to form the Priestly edited composition of Genesis. Scholarly debate still exists regarding the stages in which the composition was shaped, the nature of the Priestly material and the extent of the later redactions of the stories; however, these problems are beyond the scope of the present article.

The Jacob story-cycle in recent biblical research

Since my study mainly focuses on Jacob's story, I will open the discussion by presenting in short the main outlines of its progression as suggested by Erhard Blum (1984: 7–151) and Albert de Pury (1975; 1991; 2001a; 2001b; 2006), and then survey in brief reconstructions put forward by other scholars.

In his early work on the narratives of Genesis 25–33, Blum reconstructed a pre-Priestly Jacob story that focuses on the Jacob-Esau and Jacob-Laban narratives and on prominent places in the North Israelite kingdom, particularly the cult places of Bethel, Shechem and Penuel. Within this pre-Priestly narrative, he reconstructed an early story (*die Jakob-Esau-Laban-Geschichte*), which he dated to the time of the United Monarchy (Blum 1984: 171–175; Carr 1996: 298–299). Blum (1984: 175–186, 200–203) suggested that this early story was later edited and expanded, and the enlarged story (which he called *die Jakoberzählung*) served to legitimize the newly established monarchy of Jeroboam. Later, Blum (2009: 313–331; 2012: 209–210) reconsidered his early dating of the composition and suggested that the *Jakoberzählung* was written in the Kingdom of Israel before the last third of the 8th century (i.e., before the prophecy of Hosea). He adhered to his reconstruction of a two-stage process of composition and described the formation of the story as follows (Blum 2012: 210):

> One might conjecture a literary formation of the earlier Jacob-Esau-Laban-story before those wars (i.e., in the Omride era) and the composition of the tripartite story of Jacob in the eighth century, perhaps under the second Jeroboam, probably in the realm of the sanctuary at Bethel.

Several scholars accepted Blum's detailed discussion of Jacob's story and the 8th century date he assigned to it, although some emphasized that literary-critical analysis does not enable accurate reconstruction of the early literary stage (i.e., the *Jakob-Esau-Laban-Geschichte*) that lay behind the 8th century composition (Carr 1996: 256–271, 298–300; 2011: 472–475; Albertz 2003: 251–252, 256; Schmid 2010: 97–117; 2012: 58–60).

Albert de Pury took on a different line of research. His point of departure was the assumption that the Jacob story should be read as an autonomous foundation saga of the 'sons of Jacob' or the 'sons of Israel'. As a legend of the origins of Israelite tribal society, it reflects the family, clan and tribes of pre-monarchical Israel. It represents Israel's relations with its neighbouring 'brothers', namely Esau/Edom and Laban/Aram, as well as Israel's territorial claims, cult places (Bethel, Shechem and Penuel) and urban centres (Mizpah, Mahanaim, Succoth).

De Pury suggested a kind of textual stratigraphy for dating the story. He examined the prophecy of Hosea 12 and proposed that the prophet was aware of Jacob's story in Genesis 25–35, and hence the story—at least in its oral form—antedated the prophecy (which was composed in writing in the late 8th century). He further suggested that Jacob's story influenced the shaping of the figure of Moses in Exodus 2–4 and that the Priestly author (P^G) knew the Jacob story and used it to form his own composition of the early history of Israel. On the basis of this evidence, de Pury dated the non-P Jacob story in Genesis 25–35 to the 8th century or slightly earlier, before the Assyrian annexation of the Northern Kingdom in 720 BCE. He further hypothesized that the story represents the major North Israelite legend of origin, whose roots might be traced back to as early as the pre-monarchical period (de Pury 2001a: 221–241; 2002: 263–270; 2006: 59–72).[1]

The assumption that most of the pre-Priestly Jacob story was composed in the Kingdom of Israel before the Assyrian conquest and annexation might be considered to be the most broadly accepted in recent biblical research. Scholars who still adhere to the idea of an exilic Yahwistic historical work have suggested that the Yahwist received some early texts written in the Northern Kingdom and integrated them within his composition (Van Seters 1992: 277–280; 1998: 503–513; Levin 1993: 389–398; Kratz 2005: 274).

Some scholars suggested that considerable portions of the Jacob story-cycle should be dated to the exilic period. Bert Dicou (1994: 126–176, 198–204) discussed the Jacob-Esau story in the context of the prophetic oracles against Edom. He suggested that the oldest part of the story is in Genesis 25 and 27, where Esau and Seir are not related to Edom. The connection of Edom with Esau/Seir belongs to a sequel, in which Genesis 28–33 was combined with the earlier Esau stories. He concludes that the most likely origin of the Jacob/Israel and Esau/Edom story is the exilic period (cf. Knauf 1988: 69–70; 1990a; 1990b). Harald Martin Wahl (1997: 287–288, 302–310) posited that the earliest possible date of the first edition of Jacob's story was the late First Temple period and that most of the story, including the episodes of Jacob in Bethel and Penuel, was written in the exilic/post-exilic period.

Mario Liverani (2005: 261–267) discussed the Patriarchal story-cycle in its final form as a single unit and suggested that its main outlines fit the post-exilic period, although it derives most of its information from traditions originating in the Land of Israel. Among the post-exilic elements in the stories are the Patriarchs' relations with Israel's neighbours (in

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[1]   For an 8th century BCE date of the early story, see also Macchi 2001: 148–152, 161–162; Heintz 2001: 174–177. Römer (2001a: 189–190) suggested that the primitive form of the story was written in the area of the former Northern Kingdom in the 8th–7th centuries, when Assyria dominated the entire territory west of the Euphrates.

particular the Edomites, Arameans and Arabs), the land that is empty of local kingdoms, the ban on marriage with the local Canaanites, and the marriage with cousins that lived in Upper Mesopotamia which should be read "in the light of the post-exilic situation of the relation between returnees and remainees" (Liverani 2005: 264).

A critical examination of the current state of research

Despite the extensive literature written on the Jacob story, some central issues still require reconsideration. Notable among them are two problems that remain practically unresolved, despite scholars' efforts to elucidate them:

(1) Assuming that the Jacob story was written in the Kingdom of Israel, no reasonable explanation has been offered for the bitter enmity between Jacob-Israel and Esau-Edom and for Israel's fear of the power of Esau/Edom.[2] During the monarchical period, the Kingdom of Israel was much stronger than Edom, and at no moment in history could Edom have posed a threat to Israel. Moreover, the two kingdoms were located in remote geographical regions, each conducting political, economic and cultural relations with its close neighbours, and, except for commercial relations, no evidence exists of close contacts of the kind reflected in the Jacob story between the two remote kingdoms.[3] Dating the Jacob-Esau episodes to the time of the North Israelite monarchy contrasts the reality of the 10th–8th centuries BCE.

(2) Historians and archaeologists today agree that the Iron Age I–IIA population groups that settled in the highlands of Canaan and later founded the kingdoms of Israel and Judah formerly lived in either the Land of Canaan or near its borders. The Arameans were Israel's enemies throughout the history of the Northern Kingdom, as indicated by the accounts of the Book of Kings, the Tel Dan inscription and the prophecy of Amos. With the local origin of the inhabitants of Israel and Judah and the continuous hostile relations with the Arameans in mind, no explanation has been offered for either the assumed close family ties between the Patriarchal family and a group of Arameans who lived in Upper Mesopotamia or for the search of Aramean brides for Isaac and Jacob in this region.

In addition to these two major historical-cultural problems, other details in the pre-Priestly Jacob story reflect an exilic/post-exilic date and do not fit the widely accepted assumption of a North Israelite work composed before the 720 BCE Assyrian conquest. In an attempt to assign the story an 8th century date, scholars suggested that all these disturbing elements were not original elements of the story. Listed below are the main features considered to be secondarily inserted to the story:

[2]   Several scholars suggested that the identification of Esau and Mount Seir with Edom is secondary, and originally, Esau was an independent figure not related to Edom. See Maag 1957: 418–429; Bartlett 1969: 9–18; 1989: 175–180; von Rad 1973: 275–276; Noth 1981: 94–98, 192–193; Otto 1979: 24–40; Dicou 1994: 137–154; Ska 2001: 19–21.

[3]   For recent solutions offered by scholars for the problem, see Blum 1984: 69–79; 2012: 208–209; de Pury 1991: 85–87; Römer 2001a: 189–191; Schmid 2001: 223–226, with earlier literature; 2012: 59–60.

(1) At the beginning of the story, Jacob's family resides in Beer-sheba, far south of the borders of the Northern Kingdom (Gen 26:23, 33). From Beer-sheba, Jacob proceeds to Bethel, the first station on his way north (Gen 28:10). The story ends with the burial of Rachel near Ephrath/Bethlehem, again within the territory of Judah (Gen 35:19). The pre-Priestly narrative opens and closes in places located within the territory of Judah, in locations that do not fit a narrative composed in the Northern Kingdom. To overcome the difficulties, Beer-sheba was omitted from the original Jacob story, 'Bethlehem' in Gen 35:19 was considered gloss, and Rachel's tomb was identified on the northern border of Benjamin, near the Kingdom of Israel's southern border (Blum 1984: 207–208; Carr 1996: 260–261).

(2) The concept of the 12 tribes (Gen 29:31–30:24, 35:16–18) is alien to the reality of the Northern Kingdom and hence considered a unit of independent origin that was secondarily linked to its context (Noth 1981: 99–100; Blum 1984: 110–111, 169–171; Van Seters 1992: 278; Carr 1996: 263).

(3) The city of Haran[4] became prominent subsequent to the late years of the Assyrian empire and in particular under the Neo-Babylonian empire (Holloway 1995). The city is mentioned three times in reference to the location of Laban's family (Gen 27:43; 28:10; 29:4), and the family's location across "the River" (i.e., the Euphrates) is explicitly noted in Gen 31:21. The prominence of Haran in the story fits the reality of the late 8th–6th centuries, not that of the time of the Israelite monarchy. To overcome the difficulty, scholars suggested that the references to Haran and the Euphrates were inserted into the text by a late compiler (Blum 1984: 164–167).

(4) Promises form an important element of the story. Jacob Hoftijzer (1956: 96–99) demonstrated that promises to the ancestors first arose at a time in which the Israelite's existence was seriously threatened, probably in the exilic period. Thus, the promises do not fit the assumed 8th century date of composition. Moreover, the promises to Jacob are closely related to those delivered to Abraham, and some promises made to Abraham are partly filled in the story of Jacob. To overcome these difficulties, the promises (except for Gen 31:13; see Blum 1984: 118–120; 298–301; Carr 1996: 211–213) were considered secondary elements in the original Jacob story (Emerton 1982; Blum 1984: 152–164, 297–301; 2012: 194–197; Van Seters 1992: 298–300; Albertz 2003: 246–251; Schmid 2010: 97–101, with earlier literature).

(5) The 'numens' of Abraham, Nahor and Isaac are mentioned in the episode of Jacob's and Laban's encounter near Mizpah (Gen 31:42, 53), which seems to indicate that the author was acquainted with their histories. Hence, these references were considered secondary to the original Jacob story.

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[4]   Throughout the article I will use the biblical rendering Haran rather than the Akkadian transcription (Ḫarrānu).

In sum, a critical examination of the current state of research of Jacob's story shows that some major problems remained unresolved and that the story's 8th century date of composition depends on the assumption that all the obviously late elements were introduced to the text at a later stage of composition. Whether the assumption that these elements were inserted into an original early narrative is correct, or conversely, that they are integral parts of the original pre-Priestly story and should be treated as keys for dating the story-cycle, will be examined in the ensuing parts of the article.

In what follows, I will re-examine the historical and cultural background of the pre-Priestly Jacob story starting with an analysis of some extra-biblical evidence that sheds new light on the story's date of composition.

Extra-biblical evidence for dating the Jacob story

Victor Hurowitz (2006) compared the story of Jacob's dream at Bethel to Mesopotamian sources connected specifically with Babylon—in particular, Nabopolassar's construction of the wall Imgur Enlil at Babylon and the fifth tablet of the Babylonian Epic of Creation (*Enūma eliš*). Through meticulous examinations of these compositions, he demonstrated that "the account of Jacob's dream contains hardly a detail without some prominent linguistic or thematic parallel to Babylon in general and the myth of its primeval foundation in particular" (p. 443). On this basis, he has established that the Bethel legend is a clear example of appropriating traditions of one city and applying them to another (Hurowitz 2006: 443). Although the Babylonian Epic of Creation was known in Assyria in the 7th century, it is unlikely that an Israelite scribe under Assyrian rule would use the national Babylonian literary work as model for Bethel.[5] It is more logical to date the composition of Jacob's dream to the time when the Babylonian empire dominated the ancient Near East, with Babylon, and Marduk's temple of Esagil at its centre, the most prominent city in the empire. At that time, *Enūma eliš* was an extremely popular text as the religious ideology promoted in the epic was in harmony with the political reality (see Frahm 2010; 2013: 97–104, 115–116). The elite of the Judahite deportees and remainees might also have encountered the popular composition and was able to understand the implication of its transfer to the Bethel temple.[6]

The transfer of the literary motifs from Babylon to Bethel indicates the latter's religious importance at that time, and should be seen as decisive evidence for both the religious importance of the Bethel temple in the 6th century BCE and the late date of composition of the Bethel episode in Gen 28:10–22.[7]

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[5]   For Sennacherib's reworking of the Babylonian Epic of Creation (*Enūma eliš*) in order to replace Marduk with the god Ashur as the creator and leader of the gods, see Machinist 1984/1985; George 1986; Frahm 1997: 220–227, 282–288.

[6]   For the relation of the Babylonian Epic of Creation (*Enūma eliš*) to the creation account in Genesis 1, see Sparks 2007: 629–632, with earlier literature in n. 11; Frahm 2010: 14–17; 2013: 104–116.

[7]   Uwe Becker (2009) put forward the suggestion that the episodes of Bethel in Gen 28:11–22* and Gen 35:1–16* were inserted into the Jacob story-cycle after the fall of Jerusalem in 587 and reflects the prominence of the place under the Neo-Babylonian empire.

Hurowitz's suggested textual evidence contradicts the conclusions of Israel Finkelstein and Lily Singer-Avitz (2009), who conducted a post-mortem re-examination of the results of the excavations at Bethel. The two scholars analyzed the published pottery of the 6th–4th centuries BCE and concluded that material evidence for activity at Bethel in the Babylonian, Persian and early Hellenistic periods is meagre, if it exists at all. They thus dismissed the idea that Bethel served as a prominent cult place in the Babylonian period and suggested that significant scribal activity at Bethel in this period was unviable (Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz 2009: 47–48).

I have already examined Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz's conclusions in detail of and will not repeat that discussion here (Na'aman 2010a: 180–182). Suffice it to say that the temple of Bethel was not discovered in the excavations, so the temple and the settlement surrounding it were located in another part of the mound. Some examples exist of formerly large, prosperous cities that were laid in ruins, whereas their temples formed the nucleus of a settlement and due to their sanctity enjoyed the support of the governing power and contributions from the believers (*ibid.*: 2010a: 181–182). Sixth-century Bethel might have been a kind of temple-city, not dissimilar to Jerusalem of the late 6th–early 5th centuries. Thus, drawing conclusions on the basis of the pottery uncovered at the excavated areas might be misleading; only examination of pottery from the temple area itself can indicate the reality of the sacred site in the 6th century BCE.

I would further suggest that the temple of Bethel reached low ebb at the time the story was composed. The author, who was probably a local priest/scribe (see below), related the Bethel episode (Gen 28:10–22) in the hope that the temple would be rebuilt and restored to its former glory at some time in the future. He therefore composed what looks like a foundation legend of the temple, which justifies its restoration and expansion, and expressed the hope that when Jacob/Israel returns home, "this stone, which I have set up as a pillar, shall be God's house; and of all that you give me I will set aside a tithe for you" (Gen 28:22).[8]

In sum, in view of the Babylonian documentary evidence, we had better assume that Bethel was a sacred cult centre in the 6th century BCE and that the episode expresses hopes for a future restoration of the temple to its former glory.

In a recently published article, Esther Hamori (2011) compared the Jacob story with the Babylonian Gilgamesh epic and demonstrated that there are a series of striking correspondences between the two texts. In her words (p. 626):

> The two stories in question share several elements that are each highly unusual and that bear no inherent relation to one another. Moreover, these features occur in the same order in the two texts. This is not to suggest that the author of the Israelite text sat looking at a copy of Gilgamesh. However, the unlikely cluster of correspondences, with the same sequence of uncommon elements, implies the author's familiarity with the story.

The major scene common to the two compositions is the wrestling match (Hamori 2011: 626–632). The two scenes open with the hero remaining alone and under attack at night by an unknown divine opponent. No arms were used in the wrestling, and the hero prevailed

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[8]   Wahl's suggestion (1997: 277) that the Bethel story was written as a late legitimization to an already destroyed cult place of Bethel is unlikely.

over his assailant. The hero released his attacker and the latter blessed him. The outcome of the combat indicates a rite of passage rather than a duel. The hero does not know the identity of the attacker before the end of the fight. Finally, the two blessings by the divine figure in the Jacob story and by Enkidu in the Gilgamesh epic are similar in both form and content. In Hamori's words, "In both cases, the force of the blessing is clear: the hero will continue to prevail as the divinely appointed father or leader of his people" (p. 632).

Hamori (2011: 633–634, with earlier literature in notes 23, 25) noted additional literary motifs common to the Jacob story and the Gilgamesh epic. These include the hairy appearance of one hero (Esau, Enkidu) as against the smooth appearance of his mate (Jacob, Gilgamesh). The contrast in appearance represents a civilized and uncivilized pair. Another shared element has been observed in the particularities of the heroes' mothers. Both Jacob's and Gilgamesh's mothers consulted God before the birth of their children, and God tells them of their children's future (Hamori 2011: 634–635).

The remarkable comparisons of multiple motifs that appear in a literary sequence indicate that the author of the Jacob story was familiar with the Gilgamesh epic and used it primarily to shape the scene of Jacob wrestling and secondarily to integrate other literary motifs in his work.[9]

At what date might the author have learned of the plot of the Gilgamesh epic? A fragment of the Gilgamesh epic was discovered at Megiddo and the story, or at least parts of it, were known to the Canaanite scribes in the Late Bronze Age city.[10] In view of this discovery, Hamori (2011: 639–641) avoided suggesting a date for the Gilgamesh epic's influence on the composition of the Jacob story. In his recent book on the formation of the Hebrew Bible, David Carr (2011: 471) suggested that several major Mesopotamian works (Atrahasis, Gilgamesh and the Code of Hammurabi) were preserved in pre-Israelite urban contexts, whether in cuneiform or in translation, long after the destruction of the Canaanite cities in the 13th through 12th centuries, and were used "as models for the emergent Judean monarchy developing its own literary curriculum". In his opinion, the authors of the Primeval History and the Covenant Code used these Mesopotamian texts to compose their works, possibly in the 10th century BCE (Carr 2011: 463–466, 470–472, 473 n. 44).

In my opinion, the assumption that Late Bronze Mesopotamian literary and legal works were preserved for centuries in a Judahite urban centre such as Jerusalem and then applied by biblical narrators for shaping their compositions is highly unlikely. The Canaanite city-states were utterly destroyed in the 13th through 12th centuries BCE, and the use of cuneiform for writing in the former regions of Canaan disappeared for hundreds of years. Writing in Akkadian in the Syro-Palestinian region was resumed only after the Assyrians conquered the area in the second half of the 8th century.[11] The new

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[9]   Wahl (1997: 284–286) compared the nocturnal wrestling match between God and a human being to similar Greek and Latin stories and dated the episode to the post-exilic period.

[10]   For the fragmented tablet, see Horowitz *et al*. 2006: 102–105, with earlier literature. For the provenance of the tablet, see Goren *et al*. 2009.

[11]   An exception is the letter a ruler of the Middle Euphrates region sent to the King of Hamath in the 830s BCE (see Parpola 1990).

urban centres that gradually developed in the central highlands in the early 1st millennium emerged long after the last cuneiform texts disappeared from the region and the tradition of writing Akkadian died out in the former Canaanite regions. Moreover, not only were the Mesopotamian literary and juridical works alien to the cultural memories of the new settlers in the highlands of Canaan, but also, the new centres that gradually emerged in the highlands used alphabetic script and their scribal culture rested on entirely different foundations than did that of the cuneiform-based scribes of the Canaanite city-states. We may further recall that no translation of cuneiform Akkadian works to a West Semitic language is known to date from 2nd millennium Syria and Canaan (Sanders 2009: 41, 184–185 n. 19). Since the Akkadian script and the Akkadian language were not used in the Syro-Canaanite arena in the late 2nd–early 1st millennia BCE, it is unlikely that works written in a foreign language (Akkadian) were preserved for hundreds of years and finally used as models for the curriculum developed in the courts of Israel and Judah. The only viable option is that the Gilgamesh epic was introduced to the literati of Israel and Judah after the Assyrian conquest—that is, not earlier than the 7th century BCE. As the application of the Babylonian Epic of Creation to the Jacob story is dated to the time of the Babylonian empire, I suggest dating the application of the Gilgamesh epic to the same time.

In sum, the 6th century author of the Jacob story was acquainted with two major Babylonian classical works. He used them to shape and enrich some major episodes within the work he composed. The new light shed by the extra-biblical sources on the date of composition of central episodes within the Jacob story calls for a thorough re-examination of the story, on the one hand, and its relation to the other Patriarchal stories in the Book of Genesis, on the other.

The Jacob story in the context of the early exilic period

In this section I will analyze five central episodes, or elements embedded in them, that further support the dating of the Jacob story-cycle to the exilic period.

Israel and Edom

I have already emphasized how questionable it is to date the Jacob-Esau story, which reflects impending Edomite danger to Jacob/Israel and the latter's inferiority vis-à-vis Edom, to the time of the North Israelite monarchy. Dating Jacob's story to the 6th century BCE immediately solves the problem of Esau/Edom as a local power that threatened Jacob/Israel. The Edomites' major role in the destruction of Judah's forts and settlements in the Negev and their expansion to the southern Shephelah and the Hebron highlands was deeply engraved in Israel's cultural memory. It provides the background for the distinctive negative attitude toward Edom in biblical prophecy of the exilic and post-exilic periods (Haller 1925: 109–117; Myers 1971; Cresson 1972; Dicou 1994: 20–114, 182–197; Glazier-McDonald 1995). In the Jacob-Esau story-cycle (Gen 25:21–34; 27:1–45; 32:4–24; 33:1–16), Jacob represents the community that remained in the land and was threatened by the growing power and rapid expansion of Esau/Edom. The story echoes Jacob's fear of Esau and apprehension of his growing power. It is thus evident that the Jacob story

reflects the Judahite-Edomite relations in the south after the fall of Jerusalem, the utter destruction of the settlements of the Negev of Judah and the Edomite expansion to the former Judahite territories in the 6th century BCE.[12]

Haran "across the river"

As noted above, Haran is mentioned three times in reference to the location of Laban's family (Gen 27:43; 28:10; 29:4). At the beginning of the episode of Jacob's escape, Rebekah directed him to find shelter in her brother's house at Haran (27:43), and he followed her advice, proceeded toward the city (28:10) and finally arrived there (29:4). The stations in Jacob's story-cycle are always exactly defined and he moves from one named place to another (Beer-sheba–Bethel–Haran–Gilead and Mizpah—Mahanaim–Penuel–Succoth–Shechem–Bethel–Ephrath—Hebron). The narrator outlines Jacob's story by a shift from one specific location to another and Haran is the only place mentioned in the course of his travels northward.

Jacob's escape from Laban and the latter's pursuit is described as follows (Gen 31:21–23):

> He fled with all that he had, and arose and crossed the River (*hannāhār*), and set his face toward the hill country of Gilead. When it was told to Laban on the third day that Jacob had fled, he took his kinsmen with him and pursued him a distance of seven days, catching up with him in the hill country of Gilead.

The episode of the escape and pursuit in vv. 21–23 is a well-built, coherent unit. Laban's seat beyond the Euphrates ("the River") is mentioned offhandedly, with no special intent, and should be accepted at face value. The elements of "the third day" and "a distance of seven days" are typological and should be classified as literary motifs devoid of concrete reality (contra Blum 1984: 165–166).[13]

In Gen 29:1 the narrator avoided repeating Haran's name for another time and related the destination of Jacob's journey by a literary designation, "the land of the people of the east" (ארץ בני קדם). The designation fits well the context, as the route from Bethel to Haran passed through the desert fringes, which in biblical historiography (Gen 25:6; Judg 6:3, 33; 7:12; 8:10; 1 Kgs 5:10; Job 1:3) and prophecy (Isa 11:14; Jer 49:8; Ezek 25:4, 10) was considered the seat of the nomads, that is, "the people of the east". This literary designation is secondary to Haran and does not accurately locate the seat of Laban's family (contra Eissfeldt 1954: 96-100 and p. 99 n. 2; Blum 1984: 103–104, 128–130).

In sum, according to the original Jacob story, Laban and his family lived in Haran, north of the Euphrates, and this location should serve as a point of departure for both discussing the identity of the Arameans mentioned in the Jacob story and for establishing a *terminus post quem* for the story (not earlier than the late 8th century; see above).

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[12]   Already suggested by Dicou (1994).

[13]   Blum (1984: 103–104, 128–130, 164–166) dismissed the originality of the text according to which Laban's seat was located beyond "the River", and yet relied on the literary motif of the seven days that appears in this same episode for rejecting Laban's original location at Haran.

The Arameans of Upper Mesopotamia

How can we explain the tradition that the Arameans who lived in the Haran region were relatives of the Patriarchal family? As noted above, the Arameans were the arch-enemies of the Kingdom of Israel in the 10th–8th centuries BCE and it is unlikely that an Israelite author would describe Israel's most bitter enemy as a relative of Israel's ancestors.

To overcome this difficulty, scholars assumed that the memory of the relations between the Arameans and Israelites is old—dated either to the dawn of Israel's history (Noth 1941: 60–64; 1981: 90–94; Lemaire 1978; 1984; Otto 1979: 89–108; Lipiński 2000: 55–74) or to the early monarchical period (Blum 1984: 194–200; de Pury 1991: 86–87, 93; 2001a: 237–241). In support, some have cited Deut 26:5—"A perishing Aramean was my father"—and identified the said Aramean with Jacob.[14] First, however, near consensus exists today among historians and archaeologists that Israel emerged and developed in the confines of the Land of Canaan (see above). The assumed family relations between Israelites and the Arameans of Upper Mesopotamia in the early Iron Age that were memorized for centuries and finally composed in writing in the Northern Kingdom are historically and culturally implausible. Second, the Patriarchs were not mentioned in the early strata of the Books of Exodus and Deuteronomy and were inserted into the stories of the Exodus and the wanderings in the desert only at a later stage of composition (Römer 1990; 1991; Schmid 2010: 1–49, with earlier literature). According to the early Exodus story, the people of Israel grew out of the multitude of groups that lived in Egypt, and their Aramean ancestor migrated to Egypt at an unknown time (Thompson 1974: 302; de Pury 1991: 83; 2006: 55–56; Gertz 2000b). The "perishing Aramean" mentioned in Deut 26:5 sheds no light on the early relations of the Patriarchs with the Arameans of the Haran region. Third, the Priestly writer/editor of Jacob's story presents his marriage with his Aramean relatives at Haran as desirable, as against the prohibition of marriage with local Canaanite women (Gen 27:46–28:9; cf. 24:1–4). How could we explain P's approval of marriage with women who are explicitly called Aramean, in contrast to his own ideology that prohibits marriage with non-Israelite women?

What then might have been the background of the description of family relations and marriages between the Patriarchs and Arameans of the Haran region? With all due caution I suggest that the said "Arameans" of Upper Mesopotamia are the descendants of the Israelites that the Assyrians deported to north Mesopotamia who, over the course of time, lost their former ethnic identity and became "Arameans".[15] These Arameans were indeed relatives of Jacob, who in the story-cycle embodied the people of Israel. The motif of family relations with the Arameans of the Haran region appears in the histories of the three Patriarchs. By preserving close ties and conducting marriage with the Upper Mesopotamian former Israelite Arameans, the narrator expresses his hope

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[14]   For the meaning of "a perishing Aramean", see Millard 1980; Janzen 1994, with earlier literature; Steiner 1997; Lipiński 2000: 55-59; Rom-Shiloni 2012.

[15]   Liverani (2005: 264) anticipated this conclusion, but did not explain the designation "Arameans" for the Patriarchs' relatives in Upper Mesopotamia.

regarding the re-integration of the Israelite deportees to within the people of Israel. Like the Jacob story, the Abraham narrative relates that the Patriarch left his kindred in Babylonia and migrated to the Land of Israel; it is a migration that expresses the hope that the Judahite deportees who lived in Babylonia will follow suit and leave the country and return home (Dicou 1994: 163–165; Van Seters 1999: 73–82; Albertz 2003: 248–249).

In his inscriptions, King Sargon II reports that he deported 27,290 people from Samaria and resettled them within Assyria. The author of Kings relates the deportation of the Israelites and their resettlement in Upper Mesopotamia (2 Kgs 17:6). The deportation is documented in cuneiform texts unearthed in this region (Zadok 2002: 10–12, 20–26, 48–50, with earlier literature). Details of the fate of the deportees over the next generations are missing, and the common assumption is that they gradually lost their former identity and became "Arameans". Slim evidence exists, however, that at least some of the deportees kept certain elements of their former identity.

The city of Dūr Katlimmu (Tell Sheikh Ḥamad) is located on the River Habur and was the capital of the district of Bīt Halupe. Excavations at the site showed that the city greatly expanded in the Neo-Assyrian period, no doubt as a result of massive deportations. The cuneiform texts mention names of people of various origins (Fales 1993; Röllig 1993; Heltzer 1994; Zadok 1995), among them Israelites who were probably deported by Sargon II in 720 BCE.[16] Two tablets dated to year 2 of Nebuchadnezzar II (603/2) mention three persons carrying Yahwistic names (Hazaqiyau, Ahziyau, Sameyau) and another man called Menasê (Fales 1993; Postgate 1993: 109–112, 119–120; Heltzer 1994; Zadok 1995: 25–26; Becking 2002; Radner 2002: 61–63, 66–67). Although ethnic and cultural identity is comprised of manifold elements, personal names carry a distinctive character of identity. The Yahwistic names thus indicate that about 120 years after Sargon's original deportation, the deportees did not forget their former identity. The author of the Jacob story referred to a similar "Aramized" family of former Israelite origin who lived in the Haran region.

Sixth-century Haran, with its central temple dedicated to the moon god, was the most prominent Upper Mesopotamian urban centre in the time of the Babylonian empire. No wonder that the narrator connected the seat of the Patriarchs' Aramean relatives to the famous city.[17] A community of former Israelite deportees might have actually lived in the region of Haran in the 6th century, but there is as yet no evidence that proves it.

The elite of Israel and Judah retained memory of the Israelite deportees and harboured hopes for their return. These hopes are expressed in many prophetic texts (e.g., Isa 11:16; 27:13; Jer 30:3; 31:6–10, 19–20; 50:4–5; Ezek 16:50–53; Mic 2:12; Nah 2:3). However, only the author of the Patriarchal narratives described their future re-integration as a viable option. In his view, despite the Aramization of the deportees, they are still relatives of the people of Israel, and he advocated maintaining close contacts with them and—if possible—bringing them back to their former homeland.

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[16]   The name [Ra]payau appears in a tablet dated to 656 BCE (Radner 2002: 61–63, 66–67, 152).

[17]   Zadok (2002: 25, 49) mentioned a certain Azriyau from the area of Haran.

The tomb of Rachel

The narrator relates that on his way home, Jacob set out from Bethel, and when he was still "some distance from Ephrath" Rachel gave birth to Benjamin, passed away and was buried "on the way to Ephrath, that is Bethlehem" (Gen 35:16–20). Where was Rachel's tomb? 1 Sam 10:2 and Jer 31:14 placed it near the northern border of Benjamin. Scholars who suggested an early date for the original Jacob story fixed its location in the north Benjamin region, near Ramah, and regarded the words "that is Bethlehem" as a gloss that does not belong to the original Jacob story.[18]

In my opinion, this interpretation misses the narrator's intention. Like many other ancestor tombs (heroes, saints, sheikhs, righteous persons, etc.) that are identified in more than one place, the biblical tradition preserved the memory of two different identifications of Rachel's tomb: one Israelite, near the northern border of Benjamin, and one Judahite, near Bethlehem. Albright (1924: 118–119 n. 6) already observed this in a note that did not receive the attention it deserves:[19]

> When the Benjamites separated from Ephraim, and formed themselves into a separate group in the south…they soon found an appropriate site near Ramah, in the heart of their territory, for the tomb of their ancestress or patron goddess….Finally, probably still later, a colony of Ephrathites [i.e., Ephraimites] formed an enclave in northern Judah, in the district of Bethlehem, whose inhabitants were called Ephrathites for centuries thereafter….It is only natural that these Ephrathites also built a shrine to Rachel, which became regarded in the course of time as her tomb (just as in the case of the tomb of Joseph near Shechem).

An analysis of the biblical texts supports the assumption that Rachel's tomb was identified at two different places (the two tombs hypothesis was supported by Abel 1938: 426; Cassuto 1950; Simons 1959: 220; Vogt 1975: 34–36; Na'aman 1984: 328).[20] Scholars generally concur that the texts of 1 Sam 10:2 and Jer 31:14 locate Rachel's tomb in north Benjamin.[21] The identification of Ephrath with the city of Bethlehem is supported by five

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[18] Stade 1883: 5–8; Clermont-Ganneau 1896: 278; Macalister 1912; Proksch 1913: 374–375; Soggin 1961: 432–434, 436; Lombardi 1971: 60–86, 121–122; von Rad 1973: 340; Noth 1981: 85–86; Keel and Küchler 1982: 609; Blum 1984: 207–209; Knopf 1991: 85–87, 94, 125–126; Carr 1996: 260–261; Briend 2001: 270–271; Ritter 2003: 32. Demsky (1986–87: 51 and n. 7) proposed that Ephrath "could also be the identifying geographic point of reference for the area at large (Gen 35:16; 48:7)". He has further suggested that the section of the road from Bethel to Bethlehem was called anachronistically Lebo' Ephrath(ah), "the approach road to Ephrath".

[19] Albright reconstructed an earlier stage in which the tomb of Rachel was located in Wādi Samieh, in the territory of Ephraim. However, no evidence supports the suggested reconstruction of an early stage.

[20] Briend (2001: 271) suggested that Rachel's tomb near Bethlehem was constructed in the post-exilic period to preserve the memory of the early north Benjaminite tomb.

[21] See, e.g., Macalister 1912; Proksch 1913: 374–375; Dalman 1929: 354–357; Simons 1959: 310–311; Soggin 1961: 432–434, 436; Blenkinsopp 1969: 154–155; Lombardi 1971; Demsky 1976; Keel and Küchler 1982: 608; Knopf 1991: 99–100, 125–126; Luker 1992; Ritter 2003: 27–32.

biblical references (Gen 35:19; 48:7; Josh 15:59A [LXX]; Mic 5:1; Ruth 4:11). Bethlehem and its region were named Ephrath after the settlement of Ephrathite families in this area, possibly in the late 11th–early 10th century. David's designation as an "Ephrathite" in 1 Sam 17:12 and Ruth 1:2 refers to his lineage from a family that migrated from the hill country of Ephraim and settled in the area of Bethlehem (Na'aman 1984: 325–331; Japheth 2012). As Albright observed, the Ephrathite clan that settled near Ephrath/Bethlehem identified Rachel's tomb near the city.[22] The identification of Rachel's tomb near Bethlehem has been old, probably as early as the Ephrathite settlement in the region.

Identifying Rachel's tomb in the north comprised an obstacle for the Judahite author of the Jacob story, and to overcome it he identified the tomb of Deborah, Rebekah's nurse (Gen 35:8) at the same site. According to Judg 4:5, the palm-tree of Deborah was located "between Ramah and Bethel", that is, in the vicinity of Rachel's tomb.[23] The narrator, who was probably acquainted with the story of Judges 4, maintained that the said Deborah was Rebekah's nurse and located her tomb at the north Benjaminite site of Rachel's tomb. An outstanding(?) ancient oak tree grew near the tomb, and the narrator named the burial place "an Oak of Weeping" (אלון בכות)—a name that expresses mourning and alludes to the nearby cult place of Bethel, the site of weeping rites.[24] Thus, the mentioning of Deborah's burial place that perplexed scholars (e.g., Gunkel 1917: 381; Skinner 1930: 425; von Rad 1973: 338; Blum 1984: 208; Diebner 1988, with earlier literature) is fully explained by the assumption that it was deliberately included in the story in order to eliminate the north Benjaminite location as Rachel's tomb, thereby supporting its exclusive identification near Ephrath/Bethlehem.

In sum, the author of Gen 31:16–20 placed Rachel's tomb near Bethlehem, in about the same place where it was placed in the Christian tradition (see Mat 2:16–18) and where it is still identified today. This identification strongly supports my suggestion that Jacob's story was written in Judah rather than in Israel. Otherwise, the tomb would have been identified in north Benjamin, near Bethel, where the inhabitants of the Northern Kingdom claimed its location to be.

The twelve tribes system

The legend of the birth of Jacob's children (Gen 29:31–30:24) opens with four southern tribes: Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah. The clans of Reuben lived in the southern margins of the Israelite settlement in Transjordan, Simeon and Levi dwelt in the Negev and the margins of the highlands and the Shephelah, and the clans of Judah lived in the mountain region and the Shephelah of Judah. A North Israelite author would have opened the list with the foremost Northern tribes, certainly not with the names of the southernmost tribes, three of whom lived in the territory of a neighbouring kingdom (Na'aman 2009: 337). The

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[22]   For Bethlehem in the Iron Age, see Prag 2000: 169–181; Reich 2012, with earlier literature on p. 203.

[23]   For a suggested location of Deborah's palm, see Dalman 1929: 357–358.

[24]   For the combination of sacred trees and holy graves in the Galilee, see Lissovsky 2004a; 2004b; 2007.

legend that opens with the birth of four south-Palestinian tribes and concludes with the birth of a north Judahite tribe (Benjamin) and Rachel's burial in north Judah is the work of a Judahite not Israelite author.

Are there portions of Jacob's cycle that might be attributed to an 8th century North Israelite author? In the above discussion I suggested that (1) the story-cycle opens and concludes in the Land of Judah; (2) the author of the Bethel and Penuel episodes used 6th century Babylonian literary works as models for their composition; (3) the Edom referred to in the stories is that of the 6th century BCE; (4) the Arameans who lived in the Haran region are probably the former Israelites deported by Sargon in 720 BCE; (5) the episode of Benjamin's birth and Rachel's burial (35:16–20) is an integral part of the Jacob and Rachel narrative and the story of the birth of Jacob's sons (Gen 29:31–30:24); (6) the episode of Jacob's and Laban's encounter near Mizpah mentions the "numens" of Abraham, Nahor and Isaac (Gen 31:42, 53). It is thus evident that almost all episodes in the story-cycle are dated to after the elimination of the Northern Kingdom, and some are dated to the exilic period. Thus, there is hardly any part of the story that might be isolated as an independent literary unit and attributed to the time of the Israelite monarchy.[25]

The pre-Priestly Jacob story is mainly a unified literary work, except for Chapter 34 and some small passages that might have been inserted at a later time (e.g., Gen 31:3; 32:10–13; 33:1–11; 35:1–7) (Blum 1984: 35–45, 65; 152–164; Schmid 2001).[26] The cities of Beer-sheba and Harran, Rachel's burial near Bethlehem, the concept of the twelve tribes and certain divine promises to Jacob—all these elements are integral parts of the original story-cycle of Jacob. In this light I posit that this tale is a Judahite exilic composition. Indeed, the Jacob story-cycle might be read as a paradigm of a forced migration from the land, the hard life in the Diaspora and the return home. Bert Dicou (1994: 64) already observed this pattern:

> There is a remarkable similarity between the pattern of Jacob stories and the pattern of the Major Prophets. Jacob's life mirrors Israel's fate in the exilic period as depicted in the prophetic books. Jacob's/Israel's having to leave the country that YHWH has destined for him, to stay for many years in Mesopotamia, and his subsequent return under God's promise, are elements that occur not only in Genesis, but also in Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. In all three prophetic books, Israel's Babylonian exile is an important theme, including the theme of the expected and hoped for return from exile and restoration of Israel in its own land.

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[25] Scholars suggested that either the two versions of Esau's loss of his birthright in Gen 25:21–34 and 27:1–40 were originally independent texts or Gen 25:21–34 was inserted in a late stage of redaction. For discussion, see Blum 1984: 66–88; Wahl 1997: 251–267, 286–287; Ska 2001.

[26] At the end of Jacob's dream, God promises Jacob that "I am with you and will protect you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you" (Gen 28:15). After fulfilling the entire promise God again appears to Jacob in a dream and directs him to return homeward (31:13). The cycle of promise and fulfillment is basic to biblical historiography and the two verses are well integrated in their context. Verse 28:15 plays on the motif of exile and return and should not be considered a late insertion (contra Blum 1984: 152, 159–164).

The narrator relates that the hero was forced to leave the country empty-handed, was subjugated and worked long and hard in the service of the subjugator. He escaped suppression and was pursued all the way to the border of Israel. Before crossing the Jordan and returning to his homeland, he wrestled with a divine being—a combat that symbolizes a rite of passage to the Promised Land.[27] He was then threatened by a representative of the local nations (Esau/Edom) and, after reconciliation was achieved, he was able to return home. The similarity of some distinct elements in the Jacob and Exodus narratives is self-evident (Daube 1963: 67–72; Hendel 1987: 137–165; de Pury 2001a: 235–237; 2006: 66–67). Thus, the overall structure of the pre-Priestly Jacob story-cycle provides additional evidence for the exilic date of the story.

The sources of the Jacob story-cycle

Hosea's allusions to the traditions of Jacob (12:3–5, 13–14; Eng. 12:2–4, 12–13) play an important role in the discussion of the Jacob story.[28] Scholars debated whether the stories were available to the author of Hosea 12, or vice versa, whether Hosea 12 was available to the author of Jacob's story.[29] Literary comparison alone cannot settle the debate, as both interpretations are equally possible. Those who dated the Jacob cycle to the 8th century or earlier assumed that the text of Hosea depends on the Jacob story and that the prophet selected a few episodes from the earlier story-cycle. Since the detailed stories were already known to the intended audience, short allusions were considered sufficient for understanding the prophet's intention. In this article I suggest that Jacob's story was written about a century and half after the composition of Hosea's prophecies in the late 8th century BCE (see recently Jeremias 2013: 108–110), and hence the prophecies served as sources for the late narrator.[30]

The allusions of Hosea to episodes in the life of Jacob (12:3–5, 13–14) are very short, and scholars filled in the gaps in the short and cryptic prophecies and interpreted them on the basis of the detailed stories in Genesis. But did the prophecies really match the detailed stories in the Book of Genesis? To examine this issue, I will analyze in brief the three prophecies in which Hosea refers to Jacob:

1. Hos 12:1–4 (Eng. 11:12–12:3) reads:

> Ephraim has encompassed me with lies and the House of Israel with deceit. But Judah is still known by God and is faithful to the Holy One. Ephraim herds the wind and pursues the east wind all day; he multiplies falsehood and violence. They make alliance with Assyria and oil is carried to Egypt. YHWH has a lawsuit with Judah, and will

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[27] Locating the combat near the Jabbok River (and not near the Jordan) is probably due to a word-play on Jacob's name (McKay 1987: 4, 7; Dicou 1994: 145, 147).

[28] In addition to the commentaries, see Ruppert 1971; Eslinger 1980; Utzschneider 1980: 186–202; McKenzie 1986; Fishbane 1988: 376–378; Daniels 1990: 33–52; Whitt 1991: 19–43; de Pury 1991: 88–93; 2001a: 227–235; 2006: 59–62; Carr 1996: 265–266; 2011: 474–475; Chalmers 2006; Hamori 2008: 99–101; Blum 2009: 291–321.

[29] Whitt (1991: 41) assumed a common source behind Hosea 12 and Jacob's story–cycle.

[30] Whitt (*ibid.*) presented three examples indicating that the text of Genesis is a reinterpretation of the language and syntax of Hosea.

call Jacob to account according to his ways, and requite him according to his deeds. In the womb he tricked his brother, and in his vigor/manhood he strove with God.

The two sub-units in vv. 1–2 and 3–4 have several elements in common. Israel is contrasted with Judah in each sub-unit, and the general accusations against Ephraim/ Israel end with a specific example of his wrong-doings (vv. 2b, 4). Jacob's depiction as a trickster and unfaithful in vv. 3–4 is analogous to Ephraim's depiction as a vicious liar who instigates violence in vv. 1–2. Thus, evidently, Ephraim interchanges with Jacob and both stand for the Kingdom of Israel.

A straightforward reading of vv. 1–4 leads to the conclusion that Jacob's unnamed brother is Judah. The figures of Ephraim/Israel/Jacob and Judah in vv. 1, 3 stand for the two neighbouring kingdoms of Israel and Judah. The prophet accuses Jacob/Israel that from the start he tricked his brother (Judah). By "in the womb", the prophet refers to the birth of the two brothers as neighbouring kingdoms. The idea of the brotherhood of Israel and Judah rests on their simultaneous emergence as kingdoms and their devotion to the same God and might have promoted the development of the concept of the 'New Israel' (see below). In contrast, the assumed brotherhood of Israel and Edom is alien to Hosea's prophecy and hence this idea should best be abandoned.[31]

We may further note that Hosea's prophecy is roughly contemporaneous with Isaiah's prophecy of the "two houses of Israel" (Isa 8:14) (for a recent discussion, see Kratz 2006: 122–128). It is thus evident that the concept of Israel's and Judah's brotherhood emerged no later than the last third of the 8th century BCE, probably earlier.

2. Hosea 12:4b–5 (Eng. 12:3b–4) reads:

In his vigor/manhood he strove with God, but the angel proved himself lord/ruler and prevailed. He wept and made supplication to him. In Bethel he finds him and there he speaks with him.

According to the prophecy, the victor in the combat was a divine agent (מלאך), and following his defeat, Jacob wept and pleaded for a favour at Bethel, the sacred site of weeping (see Judg 2:1–5; 20:23, 26; 21:2), where God revealed Himself to him (Hamori 2008: 99–100, with earlier literature). Hosea does not identify the place of combat, but based on the context, it must have been near Bethel. This identification is supported by the descriptive designation באונו ("in his vigor/manhood"), which is a transparent allusion to בית און (Beth-aven or Beth-'on),[32] Hosea's name for Bethel (4:15; 5:8; 10:5). In contrast to Hosea, according to the Genesis story, Jacob won the wrestling match, the combat took place near Penuel, and no connection exists between the Bethel and Penuel episodes.

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[31] I suggest that it was the author of the Jacob story that first introduced the concept of the brotherhood of Jacob/Israel and Esau/Edom to biblical historiography and prophecy, and since then the motif of the Israelite-Edomite brotherhood appears frequently in biblical literature (e.g., Num 20:14–21; Deut 2:4, 8; 23:8 [ET 23:7], Jer 49:7–11; Obad 10, 12; Mal 1:2–4). For a detailed discussion of the biblical references, see Bartlett 1977; Dicou 1994: 167–181.

[32] Many scholars assumed that the city's original name was bēt-ʾōn ('House of power'), a vocalization that was preserved in the LXXB version of Josh 18:12 (*Baithaun*). See the literature cited in Na'aman 1987: 14 n. 12.

3. Hosea 12:13–14 (Eng. 12–13) reads:

> Jacob fled to the land of Aram and Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he guarded. But by a prophet YHWH brought up Israel out of Egypt, by a prophet he was guarded.

In this episode as well, Jacob is another name for the Kingdom of Israel (note the interchange of names). Almost all references to Aram in the Bible refer to Aram Damascus, so the Aram referred to in Hosea's prophecy is Israel's northeastern neighbour. The prophet refers to an episode that was known to his intended audience but is no longer clear to us. The text possibly refers to a certain Israelite refugee who fled to Aram and married an Aramean princess, and Hosea ridicules Jacob/Israel for having served Aram 'for a wife'. In contrast to Jacob/Israel, Moses guarded Israel by bringing it out of Egypt.

In sum, only the episode that connects Jacob to the cult site of Bethel and its God (Hosea 12:4b–5) reflects a genuine oral tradition of the Kingdom of Israel. In the two other episodes, Jacob is another name for Israel. Moreover, all three analyzed episodes do not reflect tradition of the origins of Israel.[33] Thus, whereas in the Book of Genesis Jacob plays a central role in the description of Israel's origin, in the prophecy of Hosea, Jacob is used mainly as another name for the Kingdom of Israel and plays an entirely different role than in Genesis.

Despite the many differences between the prophecy and story, there can be no doubt that the author of the Jacob story consulted Hosea's prophecy. He drew from the prophecy both the concept of an ancestor as a representative of a nation (i.e., Jacob for Israel and Esau for Edom) and the three episodes that Hosea assigned to Jacob. However, the narrator interpreted Hosea's historical allusions in the way they were narrated in his own time and in line with his historiographical and ideological objectives. Thus, for example, he shifted the episode of the wrestling match from Bethel to the Jabbok River in order for it to serve as Jacob's rite of passage to the Land of Israel. Hence, the Jacob stories and the Hoseanic historical allusions must be examined separately, each in its own right.

Which other written sources might have been available to the author of the Jacob story-cycle? One possible source is the Book of Amos, from which the author might have drawn the concept of the brotherhood of Israel and Edom (Amos 1:11). However, many scholars consider Amos 1:11–12 to be an exilic or post-exilic text (see the list of literature cited by Dicou 1994: 168–169 n. 5; Arneth 2004: 254–256). From Amos, he might also have drawn the figure of Isaac (Amos 7:9, 16). Amos' prophecy indicates that the House of Isaac (בית ישחק) was another name for the population of the Northern Kingdom. Since the two references conveyed very little information on Isaac, the narrator depicted him as a second chain in the sequence of the three Patriarchs, filled in the missing details according to his creative imagination and located him in the far south.

I already suggested that the figure of Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, was drawn from Judg 4:5. It seems to me that the narrator drew the place name Mizpah (Gen 31:49) and the nearby erected pillar (מצבה) (vv. 45, 51–52) from the story of Jephthah. According to

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[33]   De Pury (1992; 1994) suggested that the Jacob and Moses legends are presented in the Book of Hosea as two competing traditions of Israel's origin.

the latter, the hero proceeded from Mizpah of Gilead and crossed the border of Ammon (v. 30). Hence, Mizpah was an Israelite border town. Judges 10:17 explicitly refers to its location near Mount Gilead: "And the Ammonites were called to arms, and they encamped in Gilead; and the people of Israel gathered, and they encamped at Mizpah". Judges 11:11b relates that "Jephthah spoke all his words before YHWH in Mizpah". Hence, the city has a cult place for YHWH, probably with a sacred pillar. Building on these foundations, the narrator might have described the erection of a heap of stones and a pillar near the cult place of Mizpah. By relating Jacob's swearing of an oath by the *paḥad* of his father Isaac (Gen 31:53) and his offering of a sacrifice (v. 54), the author again might have had in mind the cult place of Mizpah (vv. 53–54). Finally, the author might have learned of the location of Penuel and Succoth from the story of Gideon's pursuit after the fleeing Midianites (Judg 8:4–21).[34] The Book of Judges, which in the biblical tradition is dated to the pre-monarchical period, fits well the author's aim to present to his intended audience the reality of early Israel.

Edward Greenstein and Graeme Auld have pointed out a number of parallels between the Jacob stories in the Book of Genesis and the stories about David in the Book of Samuel. Greenstein (1990: 173–175) observed a distinct similarity between the marriage of Jacob to the two daughters of Laban and David's marriage to two daughters of Saul. Auld (2011: 465–466) presented striking literary motifs and distinct vocabulary usages that are common to the histories of David and Jacob. He even raised the possibility that the name Laban is a deliberate modification of the name Nabal, "an ignominious person" (1 Sam 25:3, 25), a transparent allusion to his dubious personality. In light of the close similarities between the Books of Genesis and Samuel, the two scholars proposed that the Judahite stories about David were first written, and later were used—or elements taken from them were used—in new contexts to describe Jacob and the other forefathers of Israel.

Finally, Jacob's love and hate in Gen 29:16–35 might be directly connected to Deut 21:15–17. Wells (2011, with earlier literature) recently discussed in detail the relations of the law, on the one hand, and the narrative, on the other, and demonstrated their close relation. Since Wells dated the story earlier than the law, he naturally assumed that the situation envisioned in Deut 21:15–17 was inspired by the story of Jacob and his two wives. He left open the question of whether the inspiration was direct (namely, textual) or indirect (Wells 2011: 124). In this article I suggest that the narrative is later than the law of Deuteronomy and consider it a plausible assumption that the narrator was acquainted—either verbally or textually—with the law of Deuteronomy and used it in his composition.[35]

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[34]   On the basis of the Penuel and Succoth episodes in the story of Gideon (Judg 8:4–17), Dietrich (2001: 200–201) dated the episode of Jacob at Penuel to the pre-monarchical period.

[35]   Calum M. Carmichael (1985; 1992: 74–108, 140–180) put forward many other examples of connections between biblical laws, on the one hand, and the story-cycle of Jacob, on the other, and suggested that the laws hark back and make judgments upon issues that are narrated in the stories.

In sum, I suggest that early versions of the Books of Hosea, Amos, Judges, Samuel and possibly even the laws of Deuteronomy were available to the author of Jacob's story, and he made use of them in his composition. He wrote the rest of the story on the basis of the oral traditions as narrated in his own time and in accordance with his literary and ideological objectives.

The Patriarchal stories: ideology, date and reality

This study argues that the Jacob story-cycle was composed as part of a comprehensive work that included the three cycles of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The latter is depicted in the cycle as a chain in the lineage of the three Patriarchs—the father of the 12 tribes that became a symbol of the unity of the 'New Israel'. By shaping Jacob in his new role as one of Israel's Patriarchs, the narrator made a decisive transformation in his figure, turning him from the eponymous father of the Northern tribes to the ancestor of the 12 tribes of Israel. Jacob's integration among the three Patriarchs was a decisive step in the shaping of biblical historiography and the development of a unified concept of the people of Israel.

The author of the pre-Priestly Patriarchal stories was a historian who composed his work in the exilic period according to the norms of his time. The reality reflected in the narratives is that of the time after the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and annexed Judah and its neighbouring kingdoms to their territory. The author wrote the combined history of the three Patriarchs on the basis of the oral traditions he assembled, some written sources, and his creative imagination. The work he composed was directed to the elite of the 'New Israel'—that is, the inhabitants of the former kingdoms of Israel and Judah, and, unlike the Deuteronomistic History which was probably composed in Babylonia and reflects the ideology of the deportees' elite, it mirrors the outlook of the elite of those who remained.

As against the relative unity of the pre-Priestly Jacob story, there is a marked disunity in the Abraham story-cycle. This may be the result of the complex history of the text, which might have first constituted some isolated accounts or short narrative cycle, and in which several late Deuteronomistic additions were inserted in a late stage of composition (e.g., Gen 15; 17).[36] The differences in the textual history of the two story-cycles well explain the differences in unity of the two narratives.

The reality reflected in the Patriarchal stories is that of the Land of Israel in the exilic period. No kingdoms or borders existed in the territory between Beer-sheba in the south and Mizpah of Gilead in the northeast, so the Patriarchs crossed the land from north to south and back again without encountering political boundaries. The population groups mentioned in the narratives are of people who formerly lived in various kingdoms, but after the Assyrian and Babylonian annexations and the loss of national boundaries became ethnic entities that were organized in administrative districts within the confines of a vast empire. The ethnic groups that lived in the south were the Edomites, Ishmaelites and Philistines, and the Moabites and Ammonites lived in the east. A king is mentioned only

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[36]   The history of Abraham's story is beyond the range of this article. For discussions of the possible scope of the early story, see Van Seters 1975: 167–248, 310–311; Blum 1984: 273–289; Lemaire 1993: 62–75; Fischer 1994: 339–343; Römer 2001b: 193–210; Köckert 2006: 117–128; 2013.

in Philistia, and it is possible that the Babylonians did not annex the Kingdom of Gaza, which oversaw the neighbouring royal domain of Gerar (later called Saltus Gerariticus).[37]

The narrator deliberately located the Patriarchs in the south, in areas threatened by the Edomites. By locating their seats at Beer-sheba and Hebron, he emphasized that the threatened regions are the inheritance of Israel. One of the main characteristics of the narratives is the mixture of reality and yearning—the latter expressing the manner by which he hoped to settle the controversies between Israel and its neighbours. In accordance with his hopes, he described reconciliations between the Ishmaelites, Philistines and Edomeans, on the one hand, and the Patriarchs—the ancestors and embodiment of the 'New Israel'—on the other. Particularly remarkable is the way he described the reconciliation between Jacob and Esau (Gen 33:1–16), which contradicts the true historical situation in his time. This mixture of reality and hopes is remarkable and has no parallel in other historiographical works known from the ancient Near East and the Classical world.

In the context of Jacob's story the author composed the *hieros logos* of the temple of Bethel, the construction of the altar at Shechem and added etiological explanations for the names of several toponyms (Gilead, Mizpah, Mahanaim, Penuel and Succoth). Etiological explanations are also attached to almost all personal names that are mentioned in the story. A similar trend toward etiologization of personal and place names appears in the stories of Abraham (Gen 16:11, 13–14; 18:12–15; 19:20–23; 20:1; 37–38; 21:5–6, 9; 28–31) and Isaac (Gen 26:17–23, 32–33) and might be considered one of the characteristics of the Patriarchal narratives.

Of the places located in the former territory of the Kingdom of Judah, only Beer-sheba, Hebron and Bethlehem are mentioned by name. However, in pair with the foundation legend of the temple of Bethel (Gen 28:10–22), the author related what looks like the sanctification tradition of the temple of Jerusalem (Gen 22:1–14). Scholars have already posited the identification of the site of Isaac's binding with Jerusalem.[38] Such identification rests on several arguments: (1) the fourfold reference to *māqôm* as the site of binding (vv. 3, 4, 9, 14), twice in combination with God's command (vv. 3, 9); (2) the name 'land of Moriah' for the binding site (v. 2), which the Chronicler identified as Mount Moriah, the site of Solomon's Temple (2 Chr 3:1); (3) Abraham's name for the site where he sacrificed the ram, "YHWH will see",[39] with the added note, "as it is said to this day, 'On the mount

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[37] Alt (1935: 295–303) identified biblical Gerar with the Roman-Byzantine imperial estate called Saltus Gerariticus. Aharoni (1956) located the centre of the imperial estate at Tel Haror (Tell Abū Hureireh), on the western bank of Naḥal Gerar (Wādi esh-Sharicah). For further literature, see Tsafrir *et al*. 1994: 132b–133a. For the city of Gaza in the 6th–5th centuries, see Na'aman 2004: 64–67, with earlier literature.

[38] Of the rich literature written on the identification of the site of Isaac's binding, see recently Kalimi 1990; Diebner 1992/93; 1998; Schult 1999; Mittmann 2000: 67–92; Marx 2001. Diebner (1992/93) suggested that the location of the land/mount of Moriah in Genesis 22:2 was not identified because the Judahites and Samarians disagreed on the location of God's holy place (*māqôm*).

[39] For the variant reading "God will see", see Davila 1991.

of YHWH it shall be seen'" (v. 14); (4) although Abraham constructed altars at Shechem (Gen 12:7–8), Bethel (13:4) and Hebron (13:18), he did not sacrifice there.[40] The only place where he sacrificed is the *māqôm*, i.e., "the land of Moriah" (22:14). It is thus clear that the author followed the laws of Deuteronomy, according to which sacrifice is allowed only in "a place (*māqôm*) which YHWH your God will choose, to make his name dwell there" (Deut 12:11; 14:23; 16:2, 6, 11; 26:2), and has identified the site of the binding with that of the Temple in Jerusalem (Van Seters 1980: 230–233; Blum 1984: 337; Römer 2000: 217; Köckert 2006: 123).[41]

By relating in detail the sanctification traditions of the central cult places of Judah (Jerusalem) and Israel (Bethel) the author reveals one of the main objectives of his work: to write a history common to the two communities remaining in the land. The literary-ideological work he wrote was a decisive step towards consolidating the new meaning of 'Israel' as a combined name for the former inhabitants of Israel and Judah.

On the basis of the above, the date of composition of the pre-Priestly Patriarchal stories can be roughly established.

(1) The influence of Babylonian literary works on the formation of two central episodes in the Jacob story points to a period in which the Babylonian empire governed the Land of Israel.

(2) Early versions of several North Israelite and Judahite literary works were available to the author.

(3) No kingdoms existed in the vast area between Beer-sheba and Mizpah, and the entire territories of the former kingdoms of Israel and Judah are presented as one political entity. This reality reflects the time after the Babylonian annexation of all the kingdoms in the region in the early 6th century BCE.

(4) Haran, the major urban centre in Upper Mesopotamia in the late 8th–- 6th centuries is presented as a key site in the Patriarchal story-cycle.

(5) Explicit references to Jerusalem are missing from the description, which indicates that the city was laid in ruins at the time of composition—that is, after 586 BCE.

(6) The grave threat of the Edomites (Esau) on Israel (Jacob) indicates that Jacob's story was written after the downfall of the Kingdom of Judah, at a time when the Edomites began expanding northward and threatened the inhabitants of the Negev, the south Shephelah and the highlands of Hebron.

(7) The promises of offspring and land and the blessings reflect the exilic period, when the mere existence of those who remained in the land was in danger.

(8) The hopes of return of the Assyrian and Babylonian deportees reflect the exilic period, after the deportations of Judahites to Babylonia in 598 and 587/6.

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[40]   Note the Priestly story in Josh 22:26–27: "Let us now build an altar, not for burnt offering, nor for sacrifice, but to be a witness between us and you…".

[41]   Note that Jacob made a sacrifice at Mizpah (Gen 31:54) and at Beer-sheba (Gen 46:1).

This evidence clarifies that the pre-Priestly Patriarchal story was written not long after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian annexation of Judah and the Transjordanian kingdoms. A date in the mid-6th century, slightly before the rise of the Persian empire, fits well all the available evidence.

The Patriarchal stories reflect the reality in the land under the Babylonian rule and the fears and hopes of the people who remained in the land. The Jacob-Esau cycle reflects the Judahite distress as a result of the Edomite expansion in the south, on the one hand, and the hope for reconciliation and return to the former status-quo, on the other. The location of the seat of the Patriarchs at Beer-sheba, which formerly marked Judah's southern boundary with Edom and was probably destroyed at the time when the story-cycle was composed, reflects the hope of return to the monarchical set of borders. The establishment of the borders with the Philistines and the friendly relations with the Arabs also reflect a hope for reconciliation. The author related an agreement with the Arameans on the northeastern front, which establishes the border in eastern Gilead, near Mizpah–a site where the border probably passed in the time of the Israelite monarchy.[42] Thus, the set of Patriarchal borders reflects the author's hope for the restoration of the glorious days of the two kingdoms, when their borders reached Beer-sheba in the south and Mizpah in the northeast.

The Patriarchal stories belong to what might be called "a literature of crisis",[43] but the reaction to the crisis they reflect is wholly different from that of the literature written then in Babylonia. In contrast to the latter's ideology of the Empty Land and the presentation of the community of deportees as the 'genuine' Israel, the Patriarchal stories reflect the viewpoint of the people Ezekiel (33:24) called "the inhabitants of these ruins in the land of Israel". Moreover, the quality of the work and its assumed intended audience indicates the degree of bias in the description of 2 Kgs 25:11–12 according to which Nebuzaradan left only some people to be vine dressers and field workers "from the poor of the land" (cf. 24:14). The differences in viewpoints and ideology between the works written in Babylonia and the Land of Israel deserve a detailed study, but this is beyond the scope of this article (see recently Macchi and Nihan 2012: 19–31, 45–47; Rom-Shiloni 2013).

The Patriarchal stories and the establishment of 'biblical Israel'

In a seminal study of the formation of 'biblical Israel', Philip Davies (1992: 11–74; 2007a: 1–24) noted the wide gap between 'historical Israel', that is, the Northern Kingdom, and 'biblical Israel'—the unity of the peoples of Israel and Judah. His work commenced the debate on the date and stages of development that led to the transformation of the name Israel from an original reference to the Northern Kingdom to a literary-ideological name for the congregation of YHWH's devotees. Scholars agree that the transformation took place only after the annexation of the Kingdom of Israel by the Assyrian empire and that the prophetic literature's extension of the name "Israel" to include the inhabitants of Judah dates no earlier

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42   In his war against the four kings of the east and north, Abraham pursued the running invaders as
      far as Dan (Gen 14:14), the northernmost city of the Northern Kingdom. But since debate exists
      regarding the dating and context of Chapter 14, I have excluded this chapter from the discussion.

43   For the concept of literature of crisis, see Römer 2012: 69–71.

than 720 BCE. Various solutions have been offered in an attempt to reconstruct the stages of transformation (Davies 1992: 75–93; 2006; 2007b; Finkelstein and Silberman 2001: 243–250; 2006a: 129–149; 2006b; Knauf 2006: 295–297, 314–316; Schütte 2012), and I also dedicated an article in an effort to find a way out of the deadlock (Na'aman 2010b).

It is widely accepted that the adoption of the Israelite identity for the inhabitants of Judah was gradual, was carried out by the scribes and elite, and was motivated by political, ideological and literary considerations (for the prophetic books, see Gray 1912: 87; Rost 1937: 41–47; Høgenhaven 1988: 10–14, 17–22; Whitt 1991: 20–23; Jeremias 1996: 257–271; Blum 1997: 17–21; Kratz 2000: 8–17; 2006; 2012). In light of the new data presented in this article, I posit the suggestion that the composition of the Patriarchal stories, which created a common past for the inhabitants of the former kingdoms of Israel and Judah, formed a decisive step in the efforts to create a common history and identity for the two communities that remained in the land. Following the writing of the Patriarchal narratives, the concept of the autochthonous unity of the people of Israel became the central ideological concept for the elite and scribes of the two communities. It decisively influenced all other works henceforth written on the early history of Israel, including the Joseph story, the Exodus and the wanderings in the desert.

It is tempting to suggest that the author of the Patriarchal stories lived in Bethel, which since the time of Josiah was included in the Kingdom of Judah and bordered with the Assyrian and Babylonian province of Samaria.[44] On the one hand, he was familiar with places in south Judah and neighbouring southern regions and with the Judahite oral traditions, and on the other, was familiar with the North Israelite urban centres and cultural memories. He made an effort to include in his work the oral stories of the two former kingdoms and made use of the North Israelite and Judahite literary works available to him. He described in detail the foundation legends of the two major temples of Judah (Jerusalem) and Israel (Bethel) while emphasizing the sanctity of his own city. His seat was on the boundary between north and south and his work was aimed at the inhabitants of the two former kingdoms, so that members of each community should learn their own past while simultaneously internalizing the past of the sister community.

As for the historicity of the stories, we must not overlook the fact that it was a literary-ideological work and that the plot and heroes' characters were shaped by the creative imagination of the author. Some of the traditions included in the stories were probably genuine cultural memories of Israel and Judah, but drawing a line between the oral traditions, their literary elaborations and the narrator's invented traditions is impossible. The Patriarchal stories are important sources for the period in which they were composed in writing, but historians should avoid using them for reconstructing the pre-monarchical and monarchical periods in either Israel or Judah.

In sum, the pre-Priestly Jacob story is mainly a unified and coherent composition that was written in Judah in about the mid-6th century BCE. It was composed as part of a larger literary-historical work that narrated the history of Israel's three ancestors and reflects

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[44]   For the suggestion that Bethel was an important cult and scribal centre in the exilic and early post-exilic periods, see Veijola 1982: 176–210; de Pury 1991; Blenkinsopp 1998; 2003; Gomes 2006: 185–223; Knauf 2006; Davies 2007a: 159–171; Na'aman 2010a: 176–182, with earlier literature.

the reality in the land after the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem and annexed Judah and all other neighbouring kingdoms. The Patriarchal story-cycle is wholly innovative in its concepts of both the three ancestors of the people of Israel and the 12 tribes as an embodiment of Israel's segregated origin. The work was intended for an audience comprised of the elite and broader community of the 'New Israel'—the inhabitants of the former kingdoms of Israel and Judah. It represented a major step towards creating a sense of unity among devotees of YHWH who remained in the land. Some of the narratives are based on oral traditions whose scope and detail cannot be established, which the author augmented by consulting a few written sources and by adding various literary and ideological elements of his own creative imagination. Once the stories were established and unified into a broad written work, they became foundation stories for later works on the early history of Israel and shaped the image of the earliest history of Israel for all generations to come.

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