

Genesis

INTRODUCTION

TITLE

Like the traditional names for the other Pentateuchal books, the title 'Genesis' is derived from the LXX. The Jews called the first book of the Law *b'erāšit*, 'in the beginning', according to the ancient practice of naming books after their opening word(s). 'Genesis' means 'origin', an apt designation for the book which as a whole is the prologue to the OT's history of Israel and which, in the creation record of its own prologue, traces the origins of all human history.

AUTHORSHIP

As part of the broader issue of Pentateuchal criticism the authorship of Genesis is discussed elsewhere in this volume in the General Articles 'Literary Criticism of the Pentateuch' and 'Moses and the Pentateuch'. For those who accept the claims to Mosaic authorship common to the other four books, particular importance attaches to two types of evidence for the Mosaic authorship of Genesis, a book in which explicit claims to such authorship are lacking.

First, there is the interpenetration of Genesis and the rest of the Pentateuch through numerous themes continued from the former into the latter, thus making the last four books dependent upon the first. Random illustrations of some of the varieties of such interrelationship are: the resumption of the genealogical line of Gn. 46 in Ex. 1:1ff. and 6:14ff.; the recalling of the narrative of the twin brothers, Esau and Jacob, and the blessing of Esau (Gn. 25ff.) as the justification of the instructions given to Israel concerning their encounter with Edom (Dt. 2:4ff.; cf. Nu. 20:14ff.); and the similarity of the end of Deuteronomy to that of Genesis. The supposition is hardly plausible that the second layer (Ex.-Dt.) was produced independently of and even by an earlier author than the foundational layer (Gn.).

Of special significance, secondly, is the NT's witness to the writing of the whole Law by Moses (see especially Jn. 1:45; 5:46f.). Quotations made by Jesus and His disciples from here and there in the Pentateuch and attributed to Moses indicate that our Lord accepted the then prevalent Jewish view that Moses wrote all five books of the Law. To argue that the inspired NT authors claim Mosaic authorship only for the particular passages they cite as Mosaic (judging also perhaps that no Genesis passages are thus cited) is to assume that they had deliberately engaged in a higher critical investiga-

tion leading them to a rejection of the current tradition of the Mosaic authorship of Genesis (and perhaps leading them to a rejection of Mosaic authorship of parts of Ex.-Dt.). Or else it is to assume that knowledge of this higher critical partitioning of the Pentateuch was imparted to the NT authors by special revelation. Neither of these assumptions appears to be acceptable. If that is so, the NT endorses the Jewish tradition of Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, not excluding Genesis.

HISTORICITY AND LITERARY PARALLELS

Many are of the opinion that Gn. 12-50 is only to a limited and uncertain extent historical simply because it narrates events which took place long before they were recorded in writing and were known only through accounts received via oral transmission extending over centuries. And Gn. 1-11 is regarded as quite unhistorical, not merely because of the extreme remoteness of the ages described but even more because parallels to the material in Gn. 1-11 are known in the mythological literature of the Ancient Near East. Texts dealing with subjects like the creation of the world and the origin of human cultures, the Deluge, and pre- and post-diluvian dynastic genealogy are known to have existed in pre-Mosaic times, some of them corresponding to Gn. 1-11 even in the general combination and arrangement of these topics.

But it is gratuitous to conclude from the mere existence of parallels to Gn. 1-11 in mythological form that the biblical account must also be non-historical. One can also judge that the events of Gn. 1-11 are historical. That being the case, it would not then be at all surprising if the story concerning them should come to be mythologized in pagan traditions, while being preserved in authentically historical form within the stream of tradition of which Gn. 1-11 is the inspired deposit. To what extent special revelation was involved in the preservation of this historical record, both in its initiation and in subsequent renewal and refashioning (including the Genesis stage), we do not know exactly, but we must reckon with special revelation as a prominent factor in the process, the more so as it is recognized that that course of transmission continued over many thousands of years.

Decisively in favour of the judgment that Gn. 1-11 is not mythological but a genuine record of history is the testimony of the rest of

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the Bible. The material in these chapters is unquestionably interpreted by inspired writers elsewhere in Scripture as historical in the same sense that they understand Gn. 12-50 or Kings or the Gospels to be historical.

Literary analysis of Gn. 1-11 points to the same conclusion. These chapters cannot be identified as non-historical on the basis of any generally applicable literary criteria. Neither are they distinguishable from Gn. 12-50 by significant differences in their literary character. There is no great divide between Gn. 11 and Gn. 12. In fact, Gn. 11 interlocks with the preceding and following narratives. Through its genealogy of Shem it integrates the history of Abraham and the ensuing genealogical lines (Gn. 12 on into the NT) with the world map of Gn. 10, the oracle of Noah (Gn. 9), and the genealogy of Adam (Gn. 5). The genealogical nature of this link emphasizes that both the preceding and following narratives are concerned with everyday, earthly (even though at the same time redemptive) history.

Gn. 1-50 is history throughout, and when the writing of history is informed by divine inspiration the resultant product is a fully trustworthy historical record, however remote in time the human historian may have been from the events recorded. This position does not permit an easy side-stepping of questions raised by the inevitable comparison of the conclusions of modern research in the various sciences with the historical presentations in the early chapters of Genesis. All we can hope to do here, however, is to draw attention in the commentary to certain features of the narrative style of Genesis, such as the frequently topical rather than chronological arrangement of materials, recognition of which may help us to avoid some of the impasses into which a more wooden traditional exegesis has often led, and may even contribute to the discovery of new possibilities for a fruitful interrelating of special and general revelation. See the commentary also for references to archaeological data illuminative of the historical reliability of the patriarchal narratives.

If Moses, in composing Genesis, was not dependent on the Near Eastern literature that exhibits parallels to Genesis, neither did he ignore it. But it would seem that, where he deliberately develops the biblical account of an event so as to mirror features of the pagan version, it turns out to be for the polemical purpose of exposing and correcting the world's vain wisdom by the light of revealed theology. The elaboration of this is not possible here, but an illustrative case would be the treatment of the Babylonian epic account of creation, known (from its opening words) as *Enuma Elish*. Acquaintance with it is evidenced in the Genesis accounts of creation (ch. 1) and of Babel-building (ch. 11), but in both passages the epic's world-view is repudiated, even ridiculed, and most effectively so at the points of obvious formal correspondence.

LITERARY AND THEOLOGICAL STRUCTURE

The outline of the commentary below follows in its major headings the genealogical sections into which Genesis is formally structured and seeks in its sub-divisions to express the unfolding theological message of the book.

Beyond the prologue (1:1-2:3) Genesis is divided into ten sections, each introduced by a superscription embodying the formula *'elleh lô'edôl*, 'these are the generations of' (slightly modified in 5:1). In five cases genealogical data constitute a large part or even the majority of the section (5:1ff.; 10:1ff.; 11:10ff.; 25:12ff.; and 36:1ff.). The placing of the entire Genesis narrative in this genealogical framework is a clear sign that the author intended the account to be understood throughout as a real life history of individual men, begotten and begetting. This genealogical line is resumed in subsequent biblical historiography, the Genesis lists being recapitulated and carried forward until the lineage of Adam has been traced to Jesus, the second Adam (cf. especially Lk. 3:23-38).

One of the major disservices of the documentary hypothesis, at least in its classical formulation, was to disrupt the unity of Genesis, and leave as a series of unrelated, overlapping and even contradictory fragments what ought rather to have been seen as the harmonious and coherent development of a single theme. Even though it understood the 'generations-formula' to be editorial sub-divisions inserted by the P-writer, yet it failed to treat them seriously. The following outline, however, and the commentary based on it, seek to show that Genesis possesses a natural unity, and that when it is seen in its unity the major positions of the documentary theorists neither accord with the facts nor are required as explanations.

The particular positioning of the several genealogical lists in Genesis was determined by the book's major thematic concern with the history of God's covenantal relationship to men. This covenant theme is traced in Genesis from the original relationship of God and man, the covenant broken by the Fall, through the redemptive re-establishment of fellowship, which eventually became concentrated in the Abrahamic covenant. At the close of the book we are on the eve of the Mosaic fulfilment of the Abrahamic covenant in the covenant at Sinai and the Israelite theocracy, which itself was the provisional prefiguration of the eternal kingdom of the new covenant. Those eras that did not witness epoch-making developments in covenant history, and especially those genealogical branches that were separated from the continuing covenant community, are covered in the briefer of the ten sections, consisting largely of genealogical data. Also, the separated genealogical lines are regularly surveyed and dismissed first, before the more ample presentation of the

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history of the elect remnant, the recipients and bearers of the accumulating covenant revelation and the line leading to Israel and the Messiah. The genealogical framework thus provided an altogether fitting structure for the historical

treatment of the covenant theme, for God administers His covenant not in atomistically individual terms but to His servants together with their families, even to the thousandth generation of those who love Him.

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COMMENTARY

1:1 - 2:3 PROLOGUE

The Genesis prologue presents those historical truths which are the necessary presuppositions for the valid pursuit of human knowledge. Among its normative disclosures are those of

the divine act of absolute creation *ex nihilo* and of a specific, terminated creation era within which appeared all the significant variety of earth's hosts. The prologue's literary character, however, limits its use for constructing scientific models, for its language is that of simple observation and

a poetic quality, reflected in the strophic structure, permeates its style. Exegesis indicates that the scheme of the creation week itself is a poetic figure and that the several pictures of creation history are set within the six work-day frames not chronologically but topically. In distinguishing simple description and poetic figure from what is definitively conceptual the only ultimate guide, here as always, is comparison with the rest of Scripture.

1:1-13 Creation's kingdoms

1:1-5 Day one. 1 The simple, chiselled, Hebrew style of this prologue favours regarding this verse as an independent declaration. If *the beginning* denotes the entire creation period, the verse could be a summary-heading. Ch. 1 would not then make a specific declaration about the world's absolute origins. Pr. 8:22f. and Jn. 1:1, however, support understanding *the beginning* as the commencement of the seven-day history. *God created* will then describe absolute creation *ex nihilo*. Consistently in the use of this verb (Heb. *bārā'*) the activity is divine, the product extraordinary or wondrously new. On this interpretation, *the heavens and the earth* are viewed in their earliest, not perfected state, yet as a totality, this being the idiomatic force in Hebrew of such contrasted pairs. Cf. Ne. 9:6 for the possibility that hosts of angels are in the author's purview. 2 *The earth*, here seen in its deep-and-darkness stage (cf. Jb. 38:8ff.), was destined to be man's habitation (Is. 45:18; cf. Pr. 8:30f.). In so far as they furthered that purpose, various developments were called *good* (vv. 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). The presence of the Creator-Spirit was the earnest of the transformation of deep-and-darkness into distinct realms (the theme of the first triad of days). 3 *God said*: creative ordering proceeded by mere executive decree (cf. Heb. 11:3; Jn. 1:3). 4, 5 The phenomenon of daylight, according to God's purpose as revealed in the names He gave (cf. Jb. 38:12ff., 19), was introduced not to eliminate earth's darkness but to alternate with it in the goodly order of *Day and Night* (cf. Ps. 104:20-23).

1:6-8 Day two. 6 *Firmament* (Heb. *rāqia'*) designates the sky according to its appearance as a canopy, or vast tent, spread by God about His chambers (cf. Ps. 104:2; Pr. 8:27; Is. 40:22). *Let it separate the waters from the waters*. By this separation the atmospheric heaven and the waters on earth were distinguished, a first step in bounding the deep. 7 The waters below required further bounding (cf. v. 9). The waters above are the clouds (cf. Pr. 8:28, AV) or, poetically, the rain reservoirs in God's 'lofty abode' (Ps. 104:13).

1:9-13 Day three. 9 By a further ordering of the primeval deep, dry land appeared as another earth-realm (cf. Pr. 8:25, 29; Ps. 104:7-9). 10 The realm of waters below (cf. vv. 6f.) now had the more precise character of land-bounded waters, or *Seas*. 11, 12 The natural means to support life having been made available

(cf. 2:5), the divine Sower scattered the seed of His creative word and the earth at His feet broke forth into green growth. *Each according to its kind*. Establishment of the major lines of differentiation in life forms is attributed to the closed era of the six days (cf. vv. 21, 24f.). Plants and trees, the two kinds of vegetation specified, are mentioned again in the work of the sixth day (vv. 29f.), which in the poetic structure of the account matches day three. Cf. Ps. 104:13-18.

1:14-31 Creature-kings

1:14-19 Day four. The first triad having delineated major kingdom-spheres, the second triad recapitulates the series (with correspondence between the successive days of each triad), appointing kings over these realms. Thus, day one (beyond v. 1) dealt with the separation of light from the darkness (v. 4), producing the cycle of day and night (v. 5), and the topically parallel day four introduces the creatures God made to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. Day four supplements by describing the cosmic system through which the results described in day one were achieved. The expressions *let there be* and *God made* are used here, as elsewhere in this passage, for acts of origination. Chronologically, this making of the heavenly luminaries (the work of day four) began in the beginning when God created the heavens and it continued along with the further fashioning of the earth described in the first three day-stanzas. In pagan thought the divine stars control human destiny; in Genesis the luminaries minister to man as servants of God, regulating day and night, supplying signs by which man may order his life and labour (cf. Ps. 104:19ff.; Jb. 38:7, 31ff.).

1:20-23 Day five. Here appear the fish of the sea and the birds of the air (cf. vv. 26, 28, 30), the living creatures that dominate the realms surveyed in the parallel second day. Chronologically, the earliest part of day five's work preceded at least the latest developments depicted under day three. 'Let the waters swarm' (v. 20, RV mg.; cf. Ps. 104:25ff.) describes the teeming results, not the method of production. The sheer supernaturalism of the latter is suggested by the formula that follows, *God created*. God's blessing in v. 22 is embodied in the creative command imparting the capacity of reproduction.

1:24-31 Day six. The sixth day contains two works, each concluding with God's recognition of purpose fulfilled (vv. 25, 31; cf. vv. 9, 11). Corresponding to the dry land with its vegetation, the distinctively new sphere of the parallel third day, are the land creatures of day six, their dominion claiming earth's produce (see vv. 29, 30). 24 *Let the earth bring forth* (cf. v. 12) suggests the possibility that already existing earth material was used as a matrix within which God's act of creation was performed. 26 *Let us make man in our image*. The explanation of the first person

plural forms is probably that the Creator speaks as heaven's King accompanied by His heavenly hosts. Where this usage appears elsewhere ministering spirits hover nearby (cf. 3:22, 24; 11:7 and 18:21 (cf. 18:2; 19:1); Is. 6:8). Men and the celestial spirits alike are personal-religious creatures involved in responsible, historical relationship to God. This divine image is neither losable nor reducible, but its ethical direction is reversible. It assumes its proper form, of course, in conformity to God's holy will. 28 *Fill the earth and subdue it*. The dominion of man, the God-like king, only begins with his natural realm, the dry land of day three, thence to be extended by cultural conquest over all the creation kingdoms of the first triad of days and over all the creature-kings of the second triad (cf. Ps. 8:5-8). 30 The subordination of both animal and plant kingdoms to man's royal service having been affirmed, the lesser rule of animals over vegetation is noted. 31a Cf. Pr. 8:30f.

2:1-3 Creator-King

2 *God finished*. This finishing of God's work assigned to day seven is not a further creating, for it is paralleled by God's resting. Both finishing and resting are viewed positively and characterize the seventh day as a distinct state of triumphant consummation for the Creator. This state had a temporal beginning but it has no end (note the absence of the concluding evening-morning formula). Yet it is called a 'day', so advising us that these days of the creation account are meant figuratively. 3 *God blessed the seventh day*. Man's history too was to lead from work begun to work completed and kingship perfected. God extended the promise of entrance into the divine sabbath (cf. Heb. 4:1ff.) by stamping the creation pattern of the seven days as a recurring symbolic cycle on man's daily existence. The sabbath day in particular was sanctified to be a constant source of blessing to man as the sign of his eternal hope. Also, by calling the royal image-bearer to follow in his Creator's way (cf. Ex. 20:8-11), the sabbath summons man to continual re-consecration of his servant-kingship to the glory of his Creator-King.

2:4 - 4:26 THE GENERATIONS OF HEAVEN AND EARTH

2:4 On these are the generations, see the Introduction above. Since the genitive in this formula is uniformly subjective, the reference is not to the origin of the heavens and the earth but the sequel thereof, particularly the early history of the earthlings. The first part of this verse, therefore, must be taken not with the preceding but the following account, which is not, then, presented as another version of creation. When they were created is literally 'in their being created'. This expression is used like the grammatically equivalent 'in their going forth from Egypt' (Dt. 4:45; 23:4; Jos. 5:4) and 'in your passing over the Jordan' (Dt. 27:4,

12) to denote an era according to its opening and formative event. Cf. also Gn. 33:18; 35:9. The reference in 2:4a (cf. the parallel in 4b) is evidently to the entire ante-diluvian period spanned in 2:4 - 4:25. *The Lord God* (Heb. *yhwh 'ēlōhīm*). The combination of the generic *'ēlōhīm*, 'God', and proper name, *Yahweh*, is found repeatedly in Gn. 2 and 3. *'ēlōhīm* is used in Gn. 1 for God as Creator; it denotes God as He is known through His revelation in creation and general providence, including man's inward and intuitive knowledge of God. *Yahweh* is used alone beginning with Gn. 4; it is God's personal name describing Him as revealed through His historical-covenantal revelation as the Lord of eschatological purpose and sovereign fulfilment. The transitional combination, 'Yahweh God', in Gn. 2 and 3 serves to identify Yahweh, the covenant Lord, as God, the Creator. Such multiple designations of deity were common in the biblical world.

2:5-25 Man's original beatitude

2:5-8 Man in the garden of God. 5 Follow RV, 'and no plant of the field was yet in the earth'. AV obscures the Hebrew idiom for an emphatic negative. RSV would treat vv. 4b-7 like a long clumsy sentence, making Gn. 2 teach that man was created before vegetation. *For the Lord God had not caused it to rain*. During the creation era, punctuated though it was with acts of supernatural origination, the preservation of life was by natural means. Thus the Creator did not originate plant life before the availability of water, whether through a process of nature or through artificial irrigation devised by man.

6, 7 *A mist went up* (preferably, 'began to go up'). These verses describe the provision of the two things mentioned as missing in v. 5. The uncertain *mist* (Heb. *'ēd*) probably refers to subterranean waters springing up over the ground. *The Lord God formed man*. Man's oneness with the created world is brought out by the similarity of *'ādām* (*man*) and *'ādāmā* (*ground*); the first man was of the earth, an earthling (cf. 1 Cor. 15:47). Man's first breath was the very *breath of life* which God breathed out; an intimacy of created mode is suggested that is consonant with the nature of man who, though an earthling, stands in image-relationship to God (cf. 1:27). The creature thus animated was not previously alive and it was nothing short of man, the image of God, that now by this immediate divine action first became a living being (cf. 1 Cor. 15:45). For man's eschatological potential see 1 Cor. 15:46ff. 8 'Had planted' would be a proper translation. *Eden* could be a Sumero-Akkadian loan-word meaning 'steppe', but appears to be a name here meaning 'delight'. As the garden of God (cf. Is. 51:3; Ezk. 28:13; 31:9), the garden was a holy place and man's position there involved priestly vocation. The preparation of the garden is developed in vv. 9-14; the assignment of man in the garden in vv. 15-17.

2:9-14 Source of life. 9 The garden of God, the Source of life, ministered abundantly to man's life, aesthetic and physical. The tree of life symbolized the prospect of a glorified life (cf. Rev. 2:7) to be attained according to the Lord's law of probation (cf. vv. 15-17). The tree of the knowledge of good and evil, like the tree of life, was named after the destiny to which it would lead. To know good and evil is to be seasoned in discriminating between opposites. The context indicates the sphere of discrimination, such as physical sensation (cf. 2 Sa. 19:35) or, as here, ethical-religious experience (cf. 1 Ki. 3:9; Heb. 5:14).

10 The river system which kept the garden well watered (cf. Gn. 13:10) perhaps exemplifies the mist (*'ēd*) phenomenon (cf. 2:6). **11-14** The narrative's concern with real earthly history is apparent in the geographical notes, especially the familiar *Hiddekel* (i.e. 'Tigris') and *Euphrates* (v. 14). *Pishon* ('Gusher') and *Gihon* ('Bubbler') are not known, and this suggests the possibility of vast changes in the terrain between Adam and Moses. Eden's fertility and its surrounding treasures fulfilled the promise of its name (cf. on v. 8) and manifested the favour of God.

2:15-17 Law of the Lord. 15 recapitulates v. 8, adding man's commission. Subjugation of the earth (cf. 1:28) began with cultivation of the garden. Keep it is perhaps a cultic charge, i.e. to guard the sanctity of God's dwelling; cf. the use of the same verb *sāmar* in 3:24; Ne. 13:22; Zc. 3:7. **16 Commanded the man.** For true covenant servants the law of the Lord is a delight (cf. Ps. 1:2); it gave direction to man's original state of blessedness. **17** The tree of knowledge, as the focus of probation, stood in Adam's path to the tree of life, the sacramental seal of the proffered consummation of blessing. *You shall die.* Though probation's proper purpose was unto life, the law of God's covenant placed Adam, as it did Israel at a later day, before life and good, death and evil (cf. Dt. 30:15ff.).

2:18-25 A wife for the man. 18 *It is not good.* Only when man existed male and female could the work of the sixth day be called 'very good' (cf. 1:27, 31), for only then could the divinely-ordained cultural programme unfold to its genealogical fullness (cf. 1:28a). *A helper.* The woman was made for the man (cf. 1 Cor. 11:9), yet not as his slave-girl but his queen. *Fit for him* (Heb. *k'negdō*) suggests primarily correspondence, likeness (cf. vv. 20, 23); as man is the image and glory of God, so the woman is the glory of the man (1 Cor. 11:7). 19 Read 'now... God had formed'; thus the Hebrew can and should be translated (cf. v. 8). **20 The man gave names.** God's naming activity (1:5, 8, 10), by which He assigns to the creation kingdoms their meaning, was imitated by man in this process of giving the creatures name interpretations. A prophetic function is thus seen to be added to the royal and priestly aspects of man's role in God's kingdom. **21, 22 The deep sleep** was not so much an anaesthetic for the man as a veil about the

woman until she was prepared to be led as a bride to her wedding. Paul understood this record of the woman's origins as straightforward history, observing that 'man was not made from woman, but woman from man' (1 Cor. 11:8). Scripture itself thus provides us with the direction to be followed in our exegetical approach to the narrative materials of this chapter. Following that direction in our exegesis of the account of the origin of man in 2:7 particularly, we find ourselves pointed away from any theoretical reconstruction in which the creative act that produced Adam is attached organically to some prior life process evolving at a sub-human level. **23 Woman, because she was taken out of Man.** The assonance of 'is and 'isā (man and woman) reflects the original name interpretation of the woman as derivative from, and hence of a kind with, the man (cf. vv. 18b, 20). **24 They became one flesh.** In their origins of the one flesh of Adam, and in their separation still male-female correlatives of one kind, they become one flesh in a new sense as God joins them in marriage (cf. Mt. 19:4ff.). This verse is a divine directive. **25 Cf. 3:7.**

3:1-24 The entrance of sin

3:1-7 Transgression of the law. 1 *The serpent.* Unless the entire paradise-Fall account is regarded as an allegory or some other non-historical form, which the rest of Scripture does not support (see the Introduction), there is no suggestion in the context that the serpent is not to be interpreted literally. Indications of literal intent are the comparison with other actual creatures and the terms of the divine judgment (3:14). The serpent was the instrument of Satan, who turned man's God-given probationary opportunity into an avenue of temptation (cf. Mt. 13:38f.; Jn. 8:44; Rom. 16:20; 1 Jn. 3:8; Rev. 12:9). *More subtle.* The camouflaged, sinuous movement of the serpent made it symbolically suitable as a medium for the wiles of the devil. 2, 3 By engaging in apologetic discourse with the challenging serpent, the woman accepted Satan's violation of the law of God's kingdom whereby all things visible had been placed under man's rule. She thereby yielded to the usurped authority of Satan. She spoke in God's defence, not, however, as a faithful witness but as an autonomous judge. Though Eve had thus already stumbled, the complete Fall of man was to involve not just the deceiving of the woman but the transgression of the man (v. 6b). 4 *You will not die.* First, Satan had challenged the stipulations of covenant law, God's norm for the present; now he contradicts its sanctions, God's interpretation of the future.

5 *God knows that... you will be like God.* With one stroke Satan re-interpreted God as a devil, a liar possessed by jealous pride, and the way of the curse as the way to blessing. Diverting attention from the spiritual direction of man's likeness to God, the tempter reduced the issue to a merely formal, existential matter

of ascent along a supposed scale of being towards god-hood. 6 *She took... and ate.* In expression of her new anti-faith and her consent to Satan's theology, the woman risked the divine threat. *And she... gave.* Cf. 1 Tim. 2:14. From apologete for God to devil's advocate! *And he ate.* By this disobedience of the one man sin entered into the world and death passed upon all men (cf. Rom. 5:12ff.). 7 *They knew they were naked.* The similarity of 'ērummim ('naked'; cf. 'arūmmim, 2:25) and 'ārūm ('subtle', 3:1) suggests a word-play: the kind of God-likeness that resulted from following the serpent's counsel was religiously a devil-likeness. The sense of shame attaching to physical nakedness (cf. 2:25) manifested consciousness of inner nakedness, the stripping of the glory of holiness from the soul. *Made themselves aprons.* Sin had side-tracked human inventiveness down a frustratingly remedial road.

3:8-19 Judgment of God. The Lord of the covenant instituted His lawsuit against the unfaithful vassals. It began with interrogation (vv. 8-13), and proceeded at once to a verdict (vv. 14-19). Divine justice could not be denied, but there was the unique wonder of a triumph of mercy through justice (cf. v. 15).

8 *God walking.* Theophany in human form was evidently a mode of special revelation from the beginning. *Hide themselves*—as though the guilty could find refuge from God in the sanctuary of God! Their own terror condemned them, for in such an ordeal of confrontation with the divine Judge the heart's reaction reveals the truth and anticipates the verdict (cf. Rev. 6:15f.). 10 *Because I was naked.* This was an evasive half-truth. Adam's sense of nakedness was, like his fear, an evil consequence of his rebellion. 11, 12 When God cut through this subterfuge, exposing the act of disobedience as the root of evil (cf. v. 17), the sinner avoided confession of guilt only by the blasphemous expedient of virtually blaming God for his fall—the woman whom thou gavest. 13 The woman seeks to absolve herself from blame by pointing the finger at the subtle serpent. 14 *Cursed are you.* There is no trial for Satan, just the pronouncing of doom. Satan's instrument, slithering in the dust, subject to trampling, becomes a symbol of his humiliation and condemnation. *Above* (lit. 'from') has been understood by some to mean 'by being made separate from', but the regular use of this preposition to express the comparison 'more than' is preferable here. 15 *I will put enmity between you and the woman.* The allegiance recently transferred to Satan will be again reversed; God will sovereignly effect a reconciliation with Himself. *Between your seed and her seed.* Beyond the woman, the whole family of the true humanity, becoming her spiritual seed by faith, will stand in continuing conflict with those descendants of fallen Adam who obdurately manifest spiritual sonship to the devil (cf. Jn. 8:33, 44). The latter identify with the devil in the battle and so participate

too in his ultimate perdition. *He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.* The 'you' still contending in the remote future points past the mere serpent to Satan. This focusing on an individual from one side in connection with the eventual decisive encounter suggests that the he too is not the woman's seed collectively but their individual champion. Since this verse elaborates the declaration just made of Satan's doom, the point of the contrast between the wounding of head and heel is that the first is fatal, and the second is not. Clearly, however, the redemptive victory would involve suffering. The special redemptive programme would require as its field a general history of man. Hence the curse of the broken covenant (cf. 2:17) announced to the fallen pair as representative of the envisaged generality of mankind was modified (vv. 16-19) by the principle of common grace. 16 *In pain.* Travail would now characterize man's genealogical development and the re-instituted marriage relationship would be disturbed by sinful inclinations towards abuse of its authority structure (cf. 4:7 for the idiom). 17, 18 *Cursed is the ground because of you.* The cursing of the ground consisted not in the introduction of new features, like thistles, but in God's providential use of the ground, which hitherto had ministered to man's welfare (cf. 1:29), as a medium of His judgment-curse against him (cf. 8:21; Jb. 31:40; Rom. 8:20ff.). 19 *To dust you shall return.* Because the ground entered into the composition of man (cf. 2:7), the curse on the ground became a power unto death working in his very members (cf. Nu. 5:16ff.). Death, formerly present in nature in subservience to man, would now terrorize man the covenant-breaker as the wages of his sin.

3:20-24 Hope of restoration. 20 *Eve.* Man's generic designation became his proper name, Adam (cf. 3:17; 4:25); but the generic appellation of the woman was replaced by the proper name, *hawwā*. The sound-play on *hay*, 'living', reflects Adam's faith as he gave this name to the woman, his reference probably being to her spiritual seed who should trample under foot the prince of death and so wrest life from the curse (cf. 3:15; 1 Tim. 2:15; Rom. 16:20). 21 *The Lord... clothed them.* This remedy for the obstacle to their approach to God (cf. 3:10) symbolized God's purpose to restore men to fellowship with Him. The sinners' shame, as a religious problem, could not be covered by their own efforts (cf. 3:7). Implied in God's provision is an act of animal sacrifice; what is explicit, however, is not the sacrificial mode but remedial result. 22 *Like one of us;* cf. above on 1:26. Through the probation-temptation man had come to experience the full dimension of the conflict of good and evil, as celestial creatures had previously known it. *Eat, and live for ever.* Punishment for such unworthy grasping of the sacrament of life would be to grant the coveted exclusion from physical death, and this would, paradoxically,

make men's state of death and alienation permanent, since reconciliation could come only by a sacrificial dying (cf. 3:15, 21). 23 Although man's expulsion from the garden mercifully forestalled that possibility, the exile-judgment was of course a manifestation of God's displeasure with fallen man. 24 *The cherubim, and a flaming sword . . . to guard the way.* Protection of the sanctuary (cf. on 2:15) was now assigned to beings who elsewhere too are found as guardians of God's throne (cf. Ex. 25:18ff.; 1 Ki. 6:23ff.; Ezk. 10; 28:14ff.), while man was viewed as a potential intruder. Yet God preserved the sanctuary with its tree of life, so reaffirming the hope of a restoration from exile, even though the way of return led through the death-curse of God's judgment-sword.

4:1-26 Man in exile

4:1-16 Banishment of humanity's firstborn.

1 In Hebrew *qayin* (Cain) and *qānīt* (I have gotten) form a pun. For Eve the name was probably related authentically to the explanation. *With the help of the Lord* is better translated 'from the Lord', giving the preposition (*et*) a meaning well attested elsewhere. Eve's explanation was a believing response to God's earlier revelation concerning both redemptive and common grace (cf. 3:15f.). 2 *Abel* (Heb. *hebel*, 'breath, vanity'). Was this a post-humous naming (cf. 4:25c) or a reflection of earlier experience of the curse's frustration (cf. 5:29; Ec. 1:2ff.)? From 2b it is clear that the Scriptures disallow historical reconstructions locating the earliest phase of food production and animal domestication relatively late in man's cultural development. 3 *In the course of time*; possibly upwards of 130 years (cf. 4:25; 5:3). Whether any of the daughters of Adam and Eve (cf. 5:4) were born during this time and already had been given in marriage to one of the brothers is uncertain (cf. 4:17, 25). *Offering*. In both cases the offering is formally one of thankful homage. 4 An expiatory purpose is not explicitly indicated even for Abel's offering; the stress on *firstlings* and *their fat portions* suggests consecration. 5 How God's favour was registered in the case of Abel over against Cain is not stated; see, however, Lv. 9:24; Jdg. 6:21; 1 Ki. 18:38; 1 Ch. 21:26; 2 Ch. 7:1ff.; cf. Ex. 14:24. That acceptance depended on the offerer's spiritual standing is suggested by the reference to the persons along with their gifts (vv. 4b, 5a) and confirmed by Heb. 11:4. 7 *Sin is couching at the door*, or, 'sin is the demon at the door', *roḥēš* ('couching') being rather regarded as the Akkadian word *rāḫisum*, an 'entrance demon', here used not to suggest such a being, but in illustration of temptation's assault on Cain and recalling the serpent of Gn. 3.

8 *Cain said to Abel*. rsv, following the versions, unnecessarily adds to the MT (cf. rsv mg.). *Against his brother*. In jealous reaction to the manifestation of God's favour (v. 4; cf.

3:15), sin exerts its divisive power. Not mere social disorder was involved but radical religious discord, the enmity of the serpent's seed against the seed of the woman. Jesus interpreted Cain's murder of Abel as the first shedding of martyr's blood (Mt. 23:35; Lk. 11:51). 9 *Where is Abel?* Cain's hiding of the evidence of sin exposed sin's continuing love of concealment (cf. 3:8ff.). *I do not know*. Cain was a liar like his father, the devil (cf. 3:4). *Am I my brother's keeper?* By a virtual confession of a sin of omission Cain sought to cover his violent sin of commission. 10 *The voice of your brother's blood*. Martyr blood invokes the vengeance of God as covenant Protector (cf. Mt. 23:35; Heb. 11:4; 12:24; Rev. 6:9ff.). 11 *You are cursed from the ground*. Cf. 3:14, 17. Whether 'from' is here separative or derivative, Cain's judgment actually included both the increased recalcitrance of the soil (12; cf. 3:18f.) and separation from Eden, not as an outpost but an outcast. 14 *From thy face I shall be hidden*. The irony of the sentence is that it dooms Cain to what he desired. *Whoever finds me will slay me*. This reference probably includes wild beasts (cf. the related 9:2ff.), but possibly envisages also the peopling of the earth in coming years. 15 *Vengeance shall be taken on him*. The human community had to expand before a special judicial institution was established. *A mark on Cain*. Taking our cue from 9:2ff. again, the 'sign' appointed to Cain may have been the dread of man instilled in beasts (cf. 35:5). 16 *Cain went away from the presence of the Lord*. The race's firstborn, crown prince of the earth, portrays the tragic direction of fallen man: into exile, without God, without hope in the world.

4:17-24 Cainite culture. In Genesis an account of side branches precedes the genealogy of the principal line leading to Israel; so here, Cainites come before Sethites. 17 *His wife*. She would be a daughter of Adam (cf. 5:4), whether born (and even married) before Cain's banishment is uncertain. *A city*; i.e. a settlement protected by structures of some sort from a threatening environment. The rise of cities prepares for the emergence of kingship. The narrative condenses passing centuries. *Enoch* means 'consecration'. Here begins the theme of man's passion to establish his own name in the earth. 18 *Father of*. The idiom allows for remote ancestry; very considerable stretches of time must be spanned in this verse. Father-son terminology was even used for the professional relationship of the head of a guild to other members (cf. v. 20). 19 *Two wives*. Lamech's abuse of the creation ordinance of marriage exemplifies the ungodly spirit of Cainite culture. 22 Metal-work in late pre-diluvian times need not surprise us in view of evidence before 6,000 ac (perhaps early post-diluvian) of its use; the iron was probably meteoric. *Tubalcain*. Cain's name was preserved in his royal successors. 23 *I have slain*. The judicial office

degenerated into a vengeful tyranny in this heir of the murderous spirit of the dynasty's founder. 24 *Lamech seventy-seven fold*. The divine protection which Cain was glad to receive, Lamech scorned. Cainite culture culminated in defiance of Him to whom it should have been dedicated.

4:25, 26 Cult of Yahweh. Though the section Gn. 2:4 - 4:26 is largely concerned with sin's entrance and escalation, it closes with a notice of the preservation of a people of God and their worship. 25 Eve, according to her explanation of his name, saw in *Seth* God's restoration of the second covenant generation after its disappearance in Abel's martyrdom and Cain's excommunication. 26 *Call upon the name of the Lord*. There had been individual worship, including external rites (cf., e.g., 4:2ff.). Now the religious worship of the community of faith was organized for their corporate covenantal consecration to the name of Yahweh.

5:1-6:8 THE GENERATIONS OF ADAM

The story now doubles back upon itself (cf. the recapitulation in the days of Gn. 1) to pick up the line of Adam through Seth, and thus to survey again the period of 'the world that then was', tracing it now to its very close. 1, 2 An introduction (vv. 1b, 2) added to the heading (v. 1a) grounds this section in the prologue-history (cf. 1:26ff.), as was the preceding section (cf. 2:4). *Named them Man*. The generic use of 'ādām contrasts with Adam as proper name in this context.

5:3-32 Covenant genealogy: Adam to Noah

As 3 shows, the sons listed in a genealogy need not be firstborn (or descended therefrom) and the age figure need not indicate when the subject first became a father. *In his own likeness*; cf. v. 1 and 1:27. Man too reproduces according to his kind (cf. 1:11f.), the divine image being transmitted in the process, yet as misdirected in man's Fall. 4, 5 *All the days that Adam lived*. Mesopotamian traditions reflect the race's memory of remarkable longevity, especially in pre-diluvian times. Whatever the physiological explanation, a providential purpose was the preservation of mankind, still few in number, young in technology, and obliged to cope with a fractious environment. *And he died*. With this refrain each biographical strophe ends, each except the last (yet cf. 9:28) and one other (see v. 24). Only violent death was mentioned in the Cainite section. Gn. 5 records 'natural' death inflicted as God's common curse on all (cf. 3:19). 22-24 The expression *walked with God* is unusual (see 6:9; cf. Mal. 2:6; Zc. 3:7); the experience evidently involved special revelation received (cf. God's walking in 3:8) and proclaimed (Jude 14f.). *He was not, for God took him*. Exempted from death (Heb. 11:5; cf. 2 Ki. 2:3, 5, 9ff.), Enoch's bodily translation into 'heaven' was a sign during the long pre-diluvian sway of the curse that

reconciliation with God ultimately includes victory over death. 29 *Shall bring us relief*; the Hebrew verb is in assonance with *Noah*. For out of read 'from' (Heb., lit.) *the ground*. In Hebrew the reference to the accursed ground stands last, explaining the burdensome character of human labour. rsv rearranges, suggesting that the ground will somehow be the source of relief. Believers' hope in the world of promise (cf. Heb. 11) intensifies their awareness of God's curse on present cultural endeavours; contrast Cainite Lamech (4:23f.). 32 *Shem, Ham, and Japheth*. Shem was the oldest (cf. 7:11; 11:10); Ham, the youngest (cf. 9:24).

The genealogies of Gn. 5 and 11:10ff. are selective, not complete. The genealogical terms they employ are frequently used for remote descent. Selective genealogies are common in Scripture and elsewhere. Moreover, the symmetrical structure, with partiality for conventional numbers, which often signalizes selective listings, is found in Gn. 5 and 11:10ff. If we follow LXX in 11:10ff., each series contains ten individuals, the tenth in each case having three sons. Cf. especially the triple fourteen form of the obviously selective genealogy of Mt. 1, the tenfold scheme of generations in Genesis, and the tenfold selective genealogy of Ru. 4:18-22. The antiquity of the race cannot, then, be determined even approximately from the data of Gn. 5 and 11:10ff. The concern of Gn. 5 is the continuance of the covenant community through the entire pre-diluvian age.

6:1-8 Cult of man

6:1-4 Deified sinners. The theme of titanic kingship is resumed from 4:24, with the royal wives and dynastic exploits. Here the pinnacle of abominations is reached, provoking divine vengeance. 2 *The sons of God* could be translated 'the sons of the gods'. Ancient texts attest to an ideology of divine kingship; human kings were called sons of various gods. This blasphemous cult was a culmination of the Cainite name-lust (cf. 4:17). As in v. 1, *daughters of men* are the daughters of men in general. By *such of them as they chose*, polygamy is meant (cf. 4:19), as practised in royal harems. 3 *My spirit shall not abide in man for ever*. The verb has also been translated 'act in', 'rule in', 'strive with', 'shield'; cf. perhaps Jas. 4:5. The point becomes clear in the contrast: *not for ever . . . but a hundred and twenty years*. Man was sealed unto judgment, waiting at the set limit of divine forbearance. Problematic for the interpretation of the offenders as angels is the concentration of God's judgment against *man and flesh*. If Jude 6 does associate angels with this episode, that aspect could be incorporated as a supplementary dimension into the above interpretation. 4 *Nephilim . . . the mighty men*. Giant stature may be involved (cf. Nu. 13:33), but political dominance is probably indicated by *the mighty* (cf. 10:8ff.). In the courts of the divine kings powerful princes arose, extending

GENESIS 6:5 - 7:24

their fathers' sway by tyrannical injustice (cf. v. 11). V. 4 appears to be inexplicable if vv. 1f. are interpreted as religiously mixed marriages of Sethites and Cainites. For *men of renown* read literally 'men of a name'. This again is the motif of 4:17ff.

6:5-8 Repentant deity. 5 As sinners multiplied (cf. v. 1), so did sin. According to God's analysis, human depravity was total. 6 *The Lord was sorry*; cf. AV, 'it repented the Lord'. In the strange cult of man sinners are deified and God does the repenting! It was the unchangeableness of the divine purpose, threatened by the near extinction of the woman's seed, that paradoxically required the change in divine government, an intrusion of radical judgment interrupting the administration of common curse and grace (cf. 3:16ff.). 7 *I will blot out* is an adumbration of watery judgment. 8 *Noah found favour*. This section, like the preceding (cf. 4:25) concludes on a note of hope.

6:9 - 9:29 THE GENERATIONS OF NOAH

6:9a The heading-formula here applies not to the subject's descendants (for Noah's descendants see 10:1ff. and 11:10ff.), but to the historical developments of his life-time. The extended treatment is indicative of the Flood's epoch-making importance (cf. 2 Pet. 3:5ff.). Since the ark-occupants' horizon evidently limits the meaning of the geographical observations (see on 6:13ff.), the narrative does not directly affirm a universal flood; nor does it deny one. Neither a local nor a universal flood involves difficulties insuperable to supernatural intervention, and no view should be rejected solely because it involves such intervention. The relevance of alleged evidence of a catastrophic flood at one time or another is rendered uncertain by our ignorance of the date of the Flood (see comments on Gn. 5 and 11:10ff.). For the same reason deductions drawn from the assumption that all mankind was destroyed are precarious, for we cannot say what portions of the earth were populated at an unknown date. Nevertheless, the Flood stands out in Scripture as the most general judgment between creation-Fall and the final consummation. At the least the Flood severed the central trunk of human history, the ark-remnant excepted, so terminating the old world and justifying the NT's representation of it as universal in its significance and as marking the end of one epoch and the beginning of another in God's programme of redemption.

6:9b - 8:19 Diluvian covenant

6:9b - 7:10 Strategy for salvation. 6:9b Integrity (*tāmim*, RSV *blameless*) marked Noah's allegiance to the Lord among his contemporaries (*generation*, a different Hebrew word from 'generations' in v. 9a). 13 *God said to Noah*. The time of God's first disclosure concerning the Flood probably marked the start of the

120-year count-down (cf. 6:3, 5ff.). If 6:13 dates that early it antedates the birth of Noah's sons (cf. 5:32; 7:6) and 6:13-21 then summarizes a series of directives reaching to near the close of the 120 years (cf. v. 18b). *With (cf) the earth* suggests that man's whole world will share in his judgment (cf. 6:7, 17). But the point is probably man's removal 'from the earth' as in 6:7; 7:4, 23 (on 'cf', 'from', cf. on 4:1). Later (v. 17) the mode of removal is specified as a Flood.

Here, and repeatedly, universal terminology is used to describe the Flood's devastation (cf. 6:7, 13, 17; 7:4, 21ff.; 8:21; 9:11, 15). Such terminology is sometimes used, however, in a limited sense (cf., e.g., 41:56ff.; Dn. 2:38; 4:22; 5:19). Moreover, the Flood history is manifestly related from the local perspective of the ark-occupants (cf. 7:18ff.). On the other hand, the range of nations arising from Noah's sons in the post-diluvian era (cf. Gn. 10, especially v. 32; cf. 9:19) points to extensive depopulation in parts at least of Asia, Africa, and Europe. This favours a more than local interpretation.

14-16 Ark translates *tēbā*, 'box', found elsewhere only in Ex. 2:3, 5. This 'vessel', about 450×75×45 feet was designed for steady floating—the course, knots, and destination were completely in the hands of God. Salvation is of the Lord, by faith (cf. Heb. 11:7). 18 *My covenant*. Rather than taking this verse as an anticipation of 9:9ff., this covenant should be understood as the relationship within which the Flood-salvation was effected; see on 8:1. Like the new covenant, it was confirmed not by an oath symbolizing judgment (cf. Gn. 15:17-21) but by a real passage through an actual divine judgment. 22 *He did all that God commanded*. Noah was mediator of the covenant. By obedience to the covenant law, i.e. to construct and enter the ark-kingdom, he became the saviour of the elect remnant. To the rest of his generation, disobedient to the last (cf. 1 Pet. 3:20; Mt. 24:37ff.; Lk. 17:26ff.), he was a prophetic witness (cf. 2 Pet. 2:5).

7:1-10 The period of construction and forewarning completed (6:11-22), a week (v. 4) was allowed for embarkation. Supplementing the stipulation that one pair of each animal-kind enter (6:19f.; 7:2b, 9), *seven pairs* (7:2a, 3) were required for clean animals and birds. According to another view, clean animals were to enter 'by sevens'; against this are the repeated male-female pairing and the absence of specification concerning an odd seventh. The clean-unclean distinction was possibly along the lines of Lv. 11 and Dt. 14, but had reference to sacrifice (cf. 8:20) rather than eating (cf. 9:3).

7:11-24 Ordeal by water. The flood (Heb. *mabbūl*, 6:17; 7:6, 7, 10, 17) denotes the cataclysmic phenomena of the forty-day period (7:14, 17) dated in v. 11. Apparently *mabbūl* is also applied, in extension of the precise usage in the Flood record proper, to the year-long episode (9:11, 15, 28; 10:1, 32; 11:10). Its

chief element was torrential rains (vv. 11b, 12), though a surge of terrestrial waters contributed to the inundation (v. 11). By these waters God subjected the old world to the ordeal of His judgment, with its dual verdicts of condemnation and (for the elect remnant) of justification (cf. 1 Pet. 3:20). 13 *On the very same day*. The completion of embarkation and the beginning of the deluge synchronized. 16 *The Lord shut him in*. This sealing of the elect unto vindication was also a closing of the door of the kingdom on those outside. The theme shifts from God's protection of Noah's family through the *mabbūl* (vv. 11-16) to the prevailing of the waters (vv. 17-24; cf. 8:4). Chronologically the narrative recapitulates, for the forty days of the *mabbūl* are the first forty of the 150 days of prevailing (cf. 7:11, 24; 8:4). The prevailing is concerned with the effects of the *mabbūl*, particularly on the ark, on the mountains, and thus on all land life outside the ark. The rising water level, though involved, is not the distinctive feature of the prevailing. 17-19 Each verse begins by stating with increasing intensity that the waters prevailed. They lifted the ark from its land moorings, carried it away, and covered the mountains. 20-24 Read v. 20 as in AV: 'Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered.' This summarizes vv. 17-19. By rising 15 cubits, the draught of the ark, the waters bore it up. Continuing to rise, they covered all the mountains in sight (cf. 8:5), so removing all land refuge. The prevailing continued a hundred and fifty days, for although life outside the ark had perished even within the *mabbūl* period, other aspects of the prevailing (viz. the covering of the mountains and floating of the ark) continued longer (cf. 8:4).

8:1-19 Vindication in judgment. Again there is chronological recapitulation as the theme becomes the subsiding of the waters (vv. 1-12); for the subsiding began as soon as the forty-day *mabbūl* ended and continued through the last 110 days of prevailing. Then it continued almost another half year (cf. vv. 4, 13), being followed by the time of re-emergence (vv. 13-19).

1 God remembered Noah. God's faithfulness in fulfilling His covenant promise is characteristically expressed as a remembering of His covenant (cf., e.g., 9:15f.; Ex. 2:24; 6:5; Lk. 1:72) or the individual(s) to whom He made covenant promises (cf., e.g., 19:29; Ex. 32:13). *God made a wind blow*; cf. 1:2; Ex. 14:21. 3-5 *Came to rest* shows that a favourable verdict was rendered at the end of the ordeal. From this verb, *nāah*, the name Noah may derive. *Ararat* was a land near Lake Van in Armenia, strategically central for post-diluvian emigration. The ark landed on the highest mountain within the view of its occupants, not necessarily the highest in Ararat. The computation in v. 3b and the date in v. 4a coincide. Hence, the statement that the waters had abated means they were

lacking (*hāsar*, lit.) the 15 cubits necessary to prevail over (i.e. to float) the ark at its location. This lack resulted from a previous process of receding (v. 3a) that began when the *mabbūl* phenomena terminated (v. 2; cf. 7:11f., 17). According to 7:24, the date of the ark's grounding marked the end of the waters' prevailing. Therefore, the prevailing of the waters over the mountains (cf. 7:19ff.) must also have ended by then. The situation was probably that the peak of the mountain on which the ark landed had become visible above the waters even before the grounding (and will then have served as the gauge of the recession recorded in v. 3a), but the other mountains within the range of vision were not seen until later (v. 5). The complete subsiding, however, involved further this emergence of the surrounding mountains and later still the re-appearance of all the land observable from the now uncovered ark (v. 13). Evidently the limited perspective from the ark's opening (cf. 6:16) before the covering was removed, plus the contours of the terrain around the ark, prevented a view down onto the lower slopes and valleys.

6-12 The successive reconnoitring missions of the raven and dove(s) were well calculated to keep Noah informed on the progressive recession at these lower, unobservable elevations. 13 About a month after these bird episodes the Noahic exodus began. Like the Mosaic it was related to a beginning of months (cf. Ex. 12:2). *Noah removed the covering*. As he did so the light of God's new day streamed into the darkness of the ark-tomb, the beginning of a veritable resurrection after the passage through the sea of death. From the new vantage-point Noah could see that the waters were removed from even the lower areas. 14-19 More time was allowed for the ground to dry and perhaps for plants to grow. Then, one year and ten days after God had sealed the ark unto judgment (whether lunar or solar year is uncertain), He commanded the survivors to come forth, vindicated, to inherit the new world.

8:20 - 9:17 Post-diluvian covenant

8:20-22 Covenant protectorate. 20 The ark-builder built an altar; so his culture found its true goal in religious dedication to the Lord. 21 Noah's sacrifice also expressed propitiation (cf. the pleasing odour). From this redemptive work of special grace the blessings of common grace issue (vv. 21b ff.). *The Lord said in his heart*. The turning aside of God's wrath is underscored by repetition of the form (i.e. the divine musing) and language of His earlier judicial decree (cf. 6:5ff.). *Curse the ground*. The diluvian ground-cursing consisted in using nature to curse man, not in changing nature. For (Heb. *kl*). This might be translated 'though'. But this clause probably continues to quote the verdict of 6:5ff.; i.e. it explains what is meant by *because of man*. 22 *Shall not cease*. This covenant promise established the earth

as a protectorate of heaven—until the final judgment.

9:1-7 Covenant mandate. Divine blessing and command combine as mankind is recommissioned to the kingdom programme assigned him at the beginning. The covenant is at once a revelation of God's law and grace, and in both a sovereign administration of His lordship 1 *Be fruitful* (cf. 8:17). The post-diluvian covenant is one of life. Its stipulations deal with the propagation of life (vv. 1 and 7), life's protection and sanctity (vv. 2 and 5f.), and its sustenance (vv. 3f.; cf. 8:22). Implicit in these stipulations is the continuance of the creation ordinances of marriage and labour. 2,3 The dread of man was surely on beasts previously and man's eating of animal flesh may likewise be a renewal of a pre-diluvian appointment. 4 The prohibition of blood had its rationale in blood's sanctity as a symbol in altar sacrifice. 5, 6 That human life might be protected, God ordained the cutting off of every kind of man-slayer. *Of every man's brother*. The murder of man by man is always fratricide. *By man shall his blood be shed*. During Lamech's dynasty human life was in jeopardy as much through the tyranny of the royal judiciary (cf. 4:23f.) as through the violence of common criminals. This reaffirmation of the state's power of the sword regulates it by insisting that the punishment does not exceed, but matches the crime. *For God made man in his own image*. This could explain both the enormity of murder and the dignity of man that justified assigning him so grave a judicial responsibility.

9:8-17 **Covenant sign.** 9 *I establish my covenant.* God's covenants regulate an order of life under His suzerainty. A peculiarity of this one is that it is an interim arrangement without eschatological sanctions. 10, 11 It is a covenant of life but only of earthly life, subservient to God's redemptive covenant of eternal life. Another peculiarity is that it does not revolve around a personal relationship between God and a people, but is *between me and the earth* (v. 13), i.e. it embraces the impersonal creatures and the earth itself (as almost every verse reiterates). God's pledge to stabilize the natural order, not devastating the world again before the end-time, dominates the arrangement. 12-17 Agreeably, *the sign of the covenant* is a divine guarantee to man and a reminder to God of His commitments as world-Protector. *My bow* translates *qeset*, the usual meaning of which is the weapon. Thus, the recurring rainbow imposed on the retreating storm by the shining again of the sun is God's battle bow laid aside, a token of grace staying the lightning-shafts of wrath.

9:18-27 Covenant in prophecy

9:18-23 Community divided. **18** *Ham was the father of Canaan.* This anticipatively connects Ham's sin (v. 22) and the curse on Canaan (vv. 25ff.). **19b** Cf. 10:1ff. **20** Translated literally

this reads, 'Noah, the husbandman, began and planted a vineyard'. rsv here unnecessarily foists a contradiction upon the biblical record (*cf.*, e.g., 4:2). 22 *Ham saw . . . and told*. This act of malicious disrespect, if it did not evidence a present encroachment of the serpent's seed within the remnant family, yet foreboded such. The exposure of nakedness recalls Satan's work (*cf.* Gn. 3); the covering of nakedness (v. 23) recalls the divine clothing of fallen man (3:21) and so bespeaks a spirit devoted to the imitation of God.

9:24-27 Patriarchal curse. 24 *When Noah . . . knew what his youngest son had done.* This introduction relating the pronouncement to the offence shows it is primarily a curse. To the same effect is the repetition of the curse on Canaan in connection with the blessings on Shem and Japheth. This utterance belongs to the series of personal curses which began with the primeval curse against Satan (3:14) and continued with that against Cain (4:11). Its terms must not be secularized, but must be understood within the sacred history entailed in God's judgment against Satan. 25 *Cursed be Canaan.* In each case the curse (or blessing) does not apply to all the members of the ethnic groups represented by the individual named but rather finds an outstanding fulfilment in the history of the group. Thus, Shem and Japheth are blessed in their descendants just as Ham is cursed in his. The mention of Ham's son, Canaan, simply makes it more obvious in that case and points directly to the fulfilment in view. *A slave of slaves shall he be to his brothers.* The opposition between Canaan and the other two, who are identified with the covenant community, declares his reprobation. The subordination of Canaan signifies the defeat of Satan's seed; the woman's seed would crush their head. There is a pun on Canaan's name; *kāna'* is used for subjugation and indeed with reference to Israel's conquest of Canaan, the fulfilment of Noah's curse (Dt. 9:3; Jdg. 4:23). 26 Follow rsv mg., 'blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem'. The doxology contains the benediction. The curse on Satan (3:15) implied salvation for God's elect; so the curse on Canaan was the means of blessing to Shem-Israel. Israel possessed its promised kingdom by dispossessing Canaan. *Shem* means 'name'; the blessing was Shem's identification with God's covenant name, Yahweh, as seen particularly in the Abrahamic covenant. 27 *God enlarge (yap̄t) Japheth (yeṭeṭ).* The outstanding development in redemptive history that found Japhethites entering the Abrahamic covenant community was the NT's apostolic mission to the Gentiles.

28, 29 The section on the generations of Noah has the popular envelope form, beginning (6:9a) and closing with genealogical formulae. These verses complete 5:32. The computation perhaps reckons the *mabbûl* strictly, as only the first forty days.

10:1 - 11:9 THE GENERATIONS OF THE
SONS OF NOAH

The multiplication of the race was attributable to the creative blessing of God (8:15ff.; 9:1, 7; cf. Acts 17:26). Yet this new dispersion (10:11f.) must also be seen as a curse, a continuation of man's exile-history (cf. 3:23ff.; 4:16). The affixed Babel episode (11:1ff.) accents that perspective.

10:1-32 Diaspora of the nations

The order is that of seniority except that the chosen Semite line comes last according to the usual pattern, even though they are here traced alongside rather than directly to Israel (11:10ff.). The descendants total a conventional seventy, an indication that exhaustive listing is not the purpose. Apart from obvious exceptions like Nimrod, the 'sons' are collective units, genealogically related to the Noahic branch to which they are assigned. Because of early intermarriages and later community interblending, certain groups could trace their lineage to more than one line. Within the three major divisions subgroupings were distinguishable by the geographical, linguistic, ethnological, and political differences cited in the colophons (vv. 5, 20, 31).

10:2-5 Sons of Japheth. According to generally-accepted identifications, the Japhethites occupied territory N and NW of the Fertile Crescent. Noah's oracle (9:27) prophesied their enlargement as the prelude to their grand-scale entrance into the covenant. Agreeably, they are here found stretching to the ends of the earth (with v. 5 cf. Is. 41:5), to the isles which would receive the summons to the Messianic kingdom (cf., e.g., Ps. 72:10; Is. 49:1ff.).

10:6-20 Sons of Ham. Their location was in general SW of the Fertile Crescent. 8 Read as in AV, 'he began to be a mighty one'. Nimrod's royal title recalls 6:4. 9 Prowess in hunting man-slaying beasts was an important and, in Mesopotamia, a peculiarly royal skill (cf. 9:5). 10 AV reads 'The beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad and Calneh, in the land of Shinar'. *Shinar* is Babylonia. 'Calneh' is not mentioned elsewhere; *all of them* (rsv) is obtained by a simple alteration of the vowels of the Hebrew word. 11 *He went into Assyria* (cf. Mi. 5:6); AV translates 'went forth Asshur'. Possibly Nimrod's activity at Babel is that described in 11:2ff; if so, cf. 10:11 and 11:8f. 15-18 The Canaanite peoples anticipate the conquest lists of Israel that document the fulfilment of Noah's curse (cf. 9:25). 19 Similarly the delineation of Canaanite territory previews Israel's promised possession. Canaan's curse is also in view in the list of doomed cities of the plain (v. 19b).

10:21–31 Sons of Shem. 21 *Father of all the children of Eber.* Noah associated the covenant line with Shem (9:26). This was realized in Abraham, ‘the Hebrew’ (*i.e.* Eberite); cf. 11:10, 16, 26. The Semites occupied the area between

the Japhethites and Hamites around the Arabian subcontinent. **25** *Peleg . . . the earth was divided* (*niṣṭēgā*). Does the pun refer to the bifurcating of the Eberites into the chosen line through Peleg (*cf.* 11:17ff.) and the Joktan line (10:26ff.), or was Peleg's family involved in the dispersion from Babel (11:1ff.)?

32 is the colophon for the entire chapter. On the *earth* translates *'eres*, a Hebrew word of variable scope, which here denotes the known world of the nations listed.

11:1-9 Dispersion from Babel

1, 2 *The whole earth.* If 'ereš is used as in 10:32, the linguistic observation applies to a situation not long after the Flood and this verse bridges a lengthy interval. If 'ereš refers to the land ('ereš) of Shinar the perspective of v. 1 is not universal; cf. v. 9. In either case, the migrating group of vv. 2ff. is only a part of mankind. Their pre-Babel migration belonged to the process of dispersion from Ararat already under way (cf. Gn. 10) and their own further dispersion from Babel (vv. 8f.) is recorded as a special judgment on their blatant embodiment of the ungodly spirit that again after the Flood characterized human civilization. **4** The city once more (cf. Gn. 4) becomes the cultural focus of mounting human arrogance. *Tower (miḡdōl)* could be a fortress; Dt. 1:28 and 9:1 speak of cities fortified up to heaven. Parallels to the account of the building of Babylon and its temple-tower (cf. the Babylonian epic *Enuma Elish*) suggest the *miḡdōl* was a prototype ziggurat or temple-mound, first found in classical form early in the third millennium BC. On the lust for a name, cf. 4:17, 22ff.; 6:4; 10:9.

5 *The Lord came down to see.* As in Ps. 2 God laughs at the counsel of kings, so here He ridicules and humbles the vanity of the tower-builders, for He must descend (so the anthropomorphism) to catch sight of their proud pinnacle far below. 7 *Let us go down; cf. 1:27; 3:22; 18:2, 21; 19:1. Confuse their language.* The confusion possibly resulted from a protracted natural process, but probably a supernatural intervention is intended, a strange miracle of confusion to be answered at Pentecost by another divine descent and a miracle of linguistic fusion. The text does not attribute all language differentiation to this event, nor even claim it as the first instance of such after the Flood, nor deny linguistic variations before the Flood. 8 *Scattered them.* What the Babelites thought to avert befell them more disruptively than was elsewhere transpiring naturally. 9 *Babel, because there the Lord confused (bālal).* Whatever its original meaning, the name meant 'gate-of-god', according to popular etymology in the Sumerian and Babylonian renderings. The satirical polemic of the Mosaic narrative appears in this Babel-*bālal* pun. Viewed through this interpretative episode, the dispersion movement of Gn. 10 appears as a curse, a centrifugal force separating men and retarding the

subjugation of the earth (cf. v. 6b). Yet in sin's context this curse proved a blessing for it also retarded the ripening iniquity that accompanied civilization's progress (v. 6) and so it forestalled such judgment as would have interfered with the unfolding of redemption.

11:10-26 THE GENERATIONS OF SHEM

The era from the Flood to the age of Abraham surveyed in the preceding section is here recapitulated, the topic now being the lineal relation of Shem to Abraham. This was partially given in 10:21-25, but here the whole interval is spanned and the fuller genealogical pattern used for the covenant line in 5:1ff., with its additional statistics from the family register, is followed. Omitted, however, are the closing total of each individual's years and the statement of death. The evidence of cultural sequences in the empire centres and elsewhere for thousands of years before Abraham shows that this genealogy, if interpreted as complete, would be too brief for the over-all period of time involved, and so confirms the selective interpretation. Certainly also we ought not to suppose (as would be necessary if the list were complete) that Noah was alive in Abraham's day and that Shem and most of the others listed were alive at Abraham's call. Would Joshua then have been justified in describing Israel's fathers of Abraham's generation solely in terms of Terah's idolatry (Jos. 24:2)? Also problematic for that interpretation would be the progressive reduction of the life span from 600 years to some 200 years in the course of what would be ten contemporary generations within some 300 years. See comments on 5:1ff. for the significance of the symmetrical literary pattern. To obtain a total of ten names in 11:10ff., the name Cainan, found in LXX and Luke's genealogy (Lk. 3:36), must be included after Arpachshad. Gn. 11 affords no basis for dating the Flood, even to the nearest thousand years.

10 *A hundred years old . . . two years after the flood.* Consistency with the data in 5:32 and 7:11 is demonstrable given various combinations of the following possibilities: Shem was born (or even begotten) at the end of Noah's 500th year; the *mabbûl* (flood) is meant in its proper sense of the first forty days; the begetting of Arpachshad was in the second year (not necessarily at its close) after the *mabbûl*. Some of the names in this genealogy are attested in extra-biblical sources, all pre-Mosaic. It was not uncommon for the names of persons and places to be the same. The names of the following ancestors of Abraham have been found as place-names in NW Mesopotamia: 18 *Peleg*; 22 *Serug*; 24 *Nahor* (cf. v. 26); 26 *Terah*. The place-name Haran (v. 31; Assyr. *harānu*, 'main road') is not identical with that of Abram's brother Haran in v. 26. Evidently the homeland of the Eberites of Peleg's line was in the north.

11:27 - 25:11 THE GENERATIONS OF TERAH

Man's kingship under God had found expression in Noah's kingdom in the ark. Now the kingdom of God is given to Abram to be possessed in God's promises, by faith. The heavenly kingdom was to appear first in pre-Messianic typical form, then in the corresponding reality of Messianic fulfilment. The Abrahamic narrative is concerned throughout with the themes of the kingdom inheritance and the kingdom heir, with emphasis on the former in 11:27 - 15:21 and the latter from ch. 16 onwards. The appearance of Terah's (not Abram's) name in the 11:27a heading accords with the Genesis framework's concern with the genealogical origins of the twelve tribes of Israel, for they stemmed from Terah not only through Abram but through Sarai (20:12) and through Rebekah, Leah, and Rachel of the lineage of Nahor, son of Terah.

11:27 - 15:21 Abram's kingdom inheritance

11:27-32 *Terah's migration.* 28 *Ur of the Chaldeans.* The usual identification with Babylonian Ur is questioned since lower Mesopotamia was not called after the Chaldeans until a thousand years after Abraham. The evidence of personal and place-names (cf. 11:18ff.) and of social-legal traditions indicates ancestral associations with the north. Gn. 24:1-10 and Jos. 24:2 seem to assign a northern homeland to the Terahites. Hence the old identification of Ur with a northern site has been renewed, with appeal to the ancient 'Haldai' designation of that area to explain 'of the Chaldeans'. From such a location, but not from southern Ur, Haran would fall on the route to Canaan (cf. v. 31). 30 *Sarai was barren.* The theme of the heir is anticipated from the outset. 31 *Together,* Hebrew 'ittam, which AV translates 'with them', could also be 'from them', i.e. from Nahor's family (cf. v. 29). -

12:1-9 *Abram's summons to Canaan.* Judging from Stephen's interpretation (Acts 7:2ff.; cf. Gn. 15:7; Ne. 9:7), Abram received God's call while still in Ur. The arrangement at 12:1 is then determined by the topic and not by chronology. Stephen also placed Abram's departure from Haran (v. 4) after Terah's death (11:32). In view of the age data in 11:26, 32 and 12:4, that would mean Abram was born when Terah was 130 and the reason Abram's name is listed first in 11:26 and 27 is not Abram's primogeniture but his importance. The Samaritan Pentateuch obviates this last problem by assigning 145 years to Terah, not 205.

1 *The Lord said.* The Abrahamic covenant was initiated by the word of God—imperative and promissory. It was a suzerainty covenant, establishing the Abrahamic community as a divine protectorate, with both stipulations and guarantees. *Go from your country.* Idolatrous allegiances of the Terahite household (cf. Jos.

24:2) must be forsaken and commitment given to the lordship of Yahweh. 2 *A great nation;* *gôy* ('nation') involves territory and people. Abram's faith perceived in this promise the city of God belonging to a better, heavenly country (cf. Heb. 11:10ff., 16), a heavenly Jerusalem that is the common destiny of all the woman's chosen seed from Abel to history's last witness to Jesus (cf. Heb. 11:4ff., 39f.; 12:22), the city-kingdom of which the Israelite kingdom in Canaan was a provisional foretaste until the Messianic age had come. For you will be a blessing read as in RV, 'be thou . . .'. It is a creative benediction, or fiat. The Abrahamic kingdom was a reinstituting of the creation kingdom (cf. 35:11), now to be attained through a redemptive process. 3 *By you all the families of the earth will bless themselves.* The NT's interpretative quotation of this, following LXX, indicates that the nations are actually blessed through the Abrahamic covenant (see Acts 3:25; Gal. 3:8). A reflexive translation in this verse is consistent with that, for those who bless themselves by Abram show they are prepared to relate to him in a brotherly fellowship of blessing, and God here promises that such will actually be blessed. The blessing is mediated through Abram and his seed (cf. 22:18; 26:4; 28:14), yet is God's blessing. These two aspects meet in the identification of the mediator-seed as Christ (cf. Gal. 3:16). *Him who curses you I will curse.* In God's becoming Abram's covenant Lord, the Noahic benediction on Shem was being fulfilled—with its corollary curse on Canaan (cf. 9:26).

4 *So Abram went.* Not all that is narrated of Abram's conduct is commendable, but there is a series of exemplary acts of obedience in faith that secured for him the title 'friend of God', i.e. one who manifests loyalty to God (cf. 2 Ch. 20:7; Is. 41:8; Jas. 2:23). *Lot went with him.* Lot's prominence may be due to the possibility he offered Abram of an heir. The common practice of adoption would readily suggest itself to Abram under the circumstances of Haran and Terah's deaths and Sarai's barrenness (cf. 11:28-30). 5 *Canaan.* Though not specifying Canaan as the promised land, God's summons (vv. 1ff.; cf. Heb. 11:8) evidently pointed Abram in that direction. 6 *Canaanites were in the land* (cf. 13:7). This statement, immediately preceding the designation of Canaan as God's territorial grant to Abram's descendants (v. 7), contrasts the actual situation to the ideal in the promise. 7, 8 *An altar to the Lord.* This altar, built at the site of Yahweh's theophany, expressed Abram's faith that this land was Yahweh's to give. So, too, a second altar was erected further south in the very shadow of Canaanite cities behind and before. 8b Cf. 4:26. 9 *Journeyed on.* Such was to be the pilgrim character of the patriarchs' lives in Canaan (cf. Heb. 11:9ff.). *Negeb,* literally 'dry', is the indefinite area of the highlands in the south. Archaeological evidence of settlements in the

Negeb between the 21st and 19th centuries BC supports biblical chronological data placing the patriarchs' residence there in that same period.

12:10-20 *Egyptian sojourn.* 10 *Down to Egypt.* Reports of Egyptian border officials show that it had long been customary to grant refuge to Asiatics who came seeking relief from famine (cf. 26:1ff.; 43:1ff.). 13 The stratagem of passing off Sarai as *my sister* had been agreed upon when they left Terah's house (cf. 20:13). It involved a half-truth, for Sarai was Terah's daughter, though not by Abram's mother (cf. 20:12). Possibly there was a further element of truth in the deception. From the area of Abram's origins comes evidence of the legal institution of 'sistership', a status that could be secured by a wife. It afforded special privilege and would constitute superior credentials, as in a foreign court. In a patriarchal society (cf. 24:29 and the prominence of Laban, Rebekah's brother), a woman given in marriage by a brother enjoyed a dual wife-sister status. The stratagem as employed by Abram (and later Isaac) was intended primarily to hide his identity as husband; but the sister status (if such it was) would have meant additional advantages. The patriarch's weakness gave occasion for a manifestation of the Lord's faithfulness as covenant-Protector, cursing those who were inimical to the fulfilment of the covenant-programme and preserving the appointed ancestress of Israel to bear the heir of promise (vv. 17ff.). 16 *He dealt well with Abram.* God's prospering of Abram out of Pharaoh's wealth did not mean approval of his subterfuge; it was a matter of grace. The inclusion of camels among Abram's expanding possessions is not anachronistic. There is clear evidence of domestication of the camel at the beginning of the 2nd millennium BC, even though their common use in caravans dates considerably later. 17 *Great plagues.* The whole pattern of Abraham's experience in Egypt forms a remarkable parallel to Israel's sojourn there.

13:1-18 *Territorial grants and claims.* 1 Though not mentioned in 12:10-20, Lot had been in Egypt, benefiting from Abram's favoured status (v. 5) and acquiring a taste for luxuriant valleys (cf. v. 10, 'like the land of Egypt'). 2 *Very rich . . . in silver, and in gold.* Even before Abram journeyed to Canaan his company and possessions had become substantial at Haran (cf. 12:5). The Terahites were perhaps merchants engaged in caravan trade. Was that the purpose of Terah's journeying from Ur and was it the business opportunities found at Haran, the caravan city, that curtailed the journey to Canaan? Abram may well have been trading along the known donkey-caravan routes of the Negeb during his years there. Cf. 20:1; 34:10; 42:34. His flocks and herds would be natural adjuncts of his commerce and the military contingent in his company (cf. 14:14) would be protection for his caravans. The patriarchs were

certainly not desert nomads. The ass was their regular beast of burden. Their home stations were near urban centres but in the more sparsely populated hill country. They were resident aliens in their associations with cities. Isaac's agricultural enterprise (26:12) may represent a transition to a more settled state, but the generally transient mode of life accentuated their pilgrim-stranger position in the land.

5-7 *Could not support both*. Even his wealth tried Abram's faith by reminding him how limited was his liberty in the promised land; cf. v. 7b. 8-13 Yet within the scope of his prerogatives Abram displayed the generosity of faith. The way chosen by Lot betrayed impatience to secure the promised bounty of the land (v. 10) without due regard to the covenant's ethical demands (cf. v. 13). 14, 15 After Abram's land grant and Lot's claim came Yahweh's grant and Abram's claim. In its definition of the land this revelation was transitional between the vagueness of 12:7 and the precision of 15:17ff. 16 The 'great nation' promise of 12:2 was also elaborated. 17 *Walk through the length and breadth*. Cf. Jos. 24:3. This was probably a symbolic legal rite by which one staked claim to real estate. A walk of faith, indeed! 18 *At Hebron*. Abram settled more permanently here, entering into parity covenants with the local princes (cf. 14:13), yet building an altar, his third, in confession of Yahweh as great Overlord of the land and claiming it for Him.

14:1-24 *Overlord of Canaan*. 1, 2 The precise political situation envisaged in Gn. 14 and the particular kings have not yet been identified. Many of the names, however, are recognized as authentic types for the early second millennium bc. Characteristic of that period, too, were coalitions for political power. The equivalent of the name *Arioch* has been found in the Mari and Nuzi documents. *Chedorlaomer* consists of two elements in a typical Elamite name pattern and means 'servant of (the goddess) Lakamar'. *Tidal* corresponds to Tudhiala, a Hittite royal name. The once-favoured identification of Amraphel with Hammurabi is now known to be impossible on linguistic grounds, as well as on the ground that the famous Babylonian king lived centuries after Abram. *Shinar* stands first, perhaps, to give a Babelite ideological colouring to the enterprise of the four kings (cf. 11:2ff.). The identity of *Ellasar* is uncertain. *Goiim* (the Hebrew means 'nations') possibly designates a group of cities in Asia Minor federalized under Tidal, *Elam*, to the SE of Babylonia, dominated the coalition. There was a strong Elamite dynasty about 2000 bc. 3 *Valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea)*. In the centuries between Abram and Moses the plain to the S of the Lisan had become a shallow extension of the Dead Sea. 4 *In the thirteenth year*. Chedorlaomer's vassal treaty had been imposed shortly before Abram came to Canaan. 5 *Came and subdued*. Expeditions of comparable distance

are attested for Mesopotamian kings even before 2000 bc. The invasion route followed the King's Highway, a caravan route running from the north southwards to the Gulf of Aqabah (by-passing the cities of the plain), and thence NW through the Negeb, circling back on the Valley of Siddim. The Transjordan area (like the Negeb) had extensive permanent settlements from about the 21st to the 19th centuries bc. This condition then abruptly ceased, but not necessarily as an immediate consequence of Chedorlaomer's invasion.

13 *Abram the Hebrew*. Like the other leaders in this context Abram is ethnically identified. He was a descendant of Eber ('*ibri*', 'Eberite' or 'Hebrew'). Consistently in the OT the usage of '*ibri*' is ethnic. The question arises whether Eberites appear in literature outside the Bible, and specifically whether the Habiru mentioned in texts from all over the Near East during the 2nd millennium are such. The Habiru were apparently professional militarists with perhaps an original ethnic unity. Theoretically, the originally ethnic term '*ibri*' might have acquired a professional significance in connection with a branch of Eberites who became militarists (i.e. the Habiru), while the ethnic meaning was preserved in the OT for the Abrahamites. It would then be plausible to interpret the term in the professional (Habiru) sense even in Gn. 14:13. But the whole theory would require substantiation and the phonetic equation involved is highly problematic. Moreover, the section beginning at Gn. 14:13 finds its climax in a benediction-doxology (vv. 19f.) in series with Noah's (cf. 9:26), which suggests that Abram is here called the *Hebrew* to relate the Abrahamite fulfilment of Noah's covenant promise to Shem through the genealogical connection (cf. 10:21).

14 *Led forth his trained men*, or 'drew (as a sword) his retainers'. Vassal covenants stipulated that the vassal must dispatch forces to protect the overlord's interests at the report of trouble. Yahweh's peculiar territorial claims were impinged upon by Chedorlaomer's claims on Canaan, and therefore Abram acts. 15 *Routed them*. No supernatural assistance is implied. The total size of the confederate force (cf. vv. 13, 24) and other factors are not known. 17, 18 *King's Valley*. The location is uncertain but is conjectured to be near Jerusalem (cf. 2 Sa. 18:18). Neither is it altogether certain that the Melchizedek episode transpired there. The verb in v. 18 may be pluperfect 'had brought out'. *Melchizedek*. Cf. Ps. 110:4; Heb. 7:1ff. *Salem* is Jerusalem (cf. Ps. 76:2). *God Most High* (Heb. '*el 'elyôn*'); each word is used for a deity in Canaanite texts, but the One on whom Melchizedek called as '*el 'elyôn*', confessing Him the Maker of heaven and earth, was identified by Abram as Yahweh, the Creator. It thus appears that during Abram's sojourning in Canaan a settled community of true faith existed under the priesthood of the king of Salem. Melchizedek was greater than Abram, but the Messianic

seed of Abram would be a greater than Melchizedek.

19, 20 *Blessed be Abram . . . enemies into your hand*. The blessing of the elect again has as its corollary the cursing of those who would curse them (cf. 9:26; 12:2f.). *A tenth*. By this tribute payment Abram testified that, whatever authorities exercised control over Canaan, Yahweh was Overlord over all. 21-24 His oath was probably sworn before Melchizedek. Vassals were customarily allowed to retain the spoil of battles fought for their suzerains, but it was the latter's prerogative to stipulate this in their treaties. The king of Sodom apparently sought to assume that role but Abram rejected the relationship. Vassal treaties prohibited subordination to any other royal benefactors. Rejection of the king of Sodom's proposal was the consistent negative counterpart to Abram's positive oath of allegiance to Yahweh as his covenant Lord.

15:1-21 *Yahweh's covenant oath*. The covenant was ratified first by divine oath (Gn. 15), and afterwards by human oath (Gn. 17). The vassal-oath was characteristic at this time of extra-biblical covenants, but on occasion suzerains would also commit themselves by oath, particularly in connection with land grants (cf. vv. 18ff.).

1 *In a vision*. If this 'vision' covers the entire chapter, it apparently included a variety of psychological states from sleep-like trance (vv. 12ff.) to a waking state with supersensory awareness (vv. 5, 10f., 17; cf. 2 Ki. 6:17). If the narrative is arranged chronologically, a period of daylight (or a longer period) intervenes between vv. 5 and 12. If it is arranged topically, a plausible reconstruction would involve the following:—v. 7 describes the episode's beginning; vv. 1b-4 belong to the trance of vv. 12ff. (note the appropriateness of God's *fear not* (v. 1) to Abram's dread (v. 12)); the waking experience of vv. 5f. belongs with that of vv. 17ff. *Shield* (Heb. *māḡēn*); cf. Pss. 3:3; 28:7; 33:20. If, by altering the vowels, this word were read as *mōḡēn*, the translation would be 'I am giving you reward'. 2-5 *What wilt thou give me?* Fulfilment of the kingdom promise depended on Abram having a dynasty to inherit it. 2b contains an obscure pun on 'Damascus' but 3 clarifies Abram's plaint. He had followed the Mesopotamian custom, well attested between 2000 and 1500 bc, whereby childless couples adopted an heir (in some cases a former slave). Adoption contracts stipulated that a natural son subsequently born would replace the adopted son as chief heir. That is the legal context of God's reassurance. 6 *Av* reads, 'he believed in the Lord'. The verb '*aman*' here expresses trust in God and therefore confident assent to His revelation of supernatural saving grace. This statement may refer to an actual 'Amen' spoken by Abram, for so vassals responded in covenant ceremonies to the proclamation of the associated rewards and penalties (cf. Dt. 27:15-26). 6b Cf. Rom. 4:3, 17ff.; Gal. 3:6ff.

The subject of the heir (vv. 1-6) is treated in subordination to the kingdom promise prominent in the verses that follow. 7 *I am the Lord who brought you from Ur*. This self-identification and reference to God's redemptive initiative corresponds to the standard opening sections of classic treaties, the preamble in which the royal covenant-maker proclaimed his style and title, followed by the historical prologue in which he recounted his mighty acts (cf. Ex. 20:2). 10 *Cut them in two*. The oath ritual for which Abram prepared was customary in treaty ratifications. From it derived various idioms for making a covenant, like the Hebrew 'cut a covenant' (so v. 18, lit.). The curse conditionally invoked in the oath was symbolized by this slaying and sundering of animals, signifying 'so may it be done to him who breaks this covenant' (cf. 1 Sa. 11:7). 11 *The birds of prey* portrayed the final act in the curse symbolism; cf. Je. 34:17-20. 12 *A deep sleep*; cf. 2:21. *Great darkness*. In this dread setting came the forewarning of Egyptian bondage.

The length of the sojourn in Egypt is stated in a round number (with v. 13 cf. Ex. 12:40) and as four 'generations', or better, 'lifetimes' (v. 16), calculated at about a century each (less than the patriarchs' own life spans). V. 15 shows that these four centuries did not include the 215 years spent by Abram, Isaac, and Jacob in Canaan, for the sojourn was to be experienced by Abram's descendants after his own death. 14 *I will bring judgment*. Long postponement would terminate in fulfilment of God's kingdom promises (cf. 12:3) at the provisional OT level through mighty acts of redemptive judgment (cf. Acts 7:17). The blessing of the Abrahamites would be accomplished through the cursing of the Egyptians and Amorites who cursed them (cf. 12:3). 16 *The iniquity of the Amorites*; cf. Lv. 18:24ff.; 20:22ff.; 1 Ki. 14:24. God's times (cf. Dn. 2:21) are not arbitrary, nor is His forbearance for ever (cf. 2 Pet. 3:9f.). 17 *Smoking fire pot and a flaming torch*. The theophany utilizes, as often elsewhere, the elements of fire and smoke to indicate God's presence; cf. especially Ex. 3:2ff.; 13:21f.; 19:18. By passing alone between the pieces God swore fidelity to His covenant promises, and took upon Himself all the curses symbolized by the carcasses. 18 *The Lord made a covenant*—such was the meaning of the strange ritual. *From the river of Egypt to the great river*. Cf. 1 Ki. 4:21. Several non-biblical treaties have geographical sections like this, listing the cities and defining the boundaries confirmed to the vassal. The land belongs to Abram's seed only within the terms of the covenant and thus only in the seed of Abram, Christ, in whom the land-promise is transfigured into its cosmic antitype (cf. Rom. 4:13) and the heirs of Abraham become the universal covenant community of the NT, there being neither Jew nor Greek in Christ.

16:1 - 22:19 Abraham's dynastic heir

16:1-15 Ishmael, son of the bondwoman. 1 The theme of the heir is reintroduced from the aspect of the natural obstacles challenging faith (cf. 11:30). In the ten years since the departure from Haran (see v. 16; cf. 12:4) the promise had been reiterated, but Sarai continued barren and alternate hopes focusing on Lot and Eliezer had been frustrated. 2 Sarai's suggestion that Abram take Hagar as a concubine was in keeping with the practice of that day as attested in legal code and marriage contract. The latter sometimes stipulated that a barren wife must acquire a slave-woman for her husband. Sometimes a wife received a personal maid as a marriage gift (cf. 29:29; 30:3); all legal rights over this maid's child belonged to the wife. 4 Laws governing this type of arrangement provided for precisely the contingency described in this verse by permitting the wife to reduce the maid to her former status but prohibiting her sale. 5 'My injustice upon you' is the literal translation of the Hebrew. Sarai appealed to Abram to enforce her legal rights. It was his responsibility to redress the wrong that was 'upon' him. 6 Hagar wins our sympathy but she was legally in the wrong.

7 *Angel of the Lord.* Cf. 21:17ff.; 22:11, 15; 24:7, 40; 31:11ff.; 48:16. Not form but function was primary in this mode of revelation, the theophany being usually of human appearance, but not always so (cf., e.g., Ex. 3:2). As the term *mal'ak*, 'messenger', itself suggests, the distinctive idea is that of being sent on a mission. This angel is sent by the Lord and even prays to the Lord (cf. Zc. 1:12f.), yet speaks as God and is otherwise identified as the Lord. Thereby intimations were afforded of personal distinctions within God, and, in particular, of the coming of the Son as One sent by the Father to fulfil the covenant (cf. Mal. 3:1). (See further the section on 'Theophany' in the Introduction to Exodus, p. 116—Ed.) *Shur* was perhaps the Egyptian frontier wall; in any case, Hagar fled towards her homeland (cf. 12:15f.). 8 Cf. 3:9; 4:9. 10 Cf. 13:16; 15:5. The universal blessing to come through Abram, though primarily redemptive, involved also the benefits of God's common grace, universally bestowed. Hagar's innumerable descendants (cf. 25:12ff.) would live in the guarantees of the post-diluvian covenant (cf. 8:20ff.) but not in the eternal order pledged to Abram's promised seed (cf. 17:18ff.). 11 Such annunciations are common in Canaanite epics of the 2nd millennium BC. *Ishmael* means 'God hears', i.e. He had heard the fugitive's cry. 12 *The wild ass*, a favourite creature in desert hunts, illustrated the proud nomad independence of the Ishmaelites. 13 The rsv rendering of Hagar's explanation of the name *God of seeing* is excessively free, but it is probably correct in centring the idea not on God's seeing her but her seeing

God, and that without fatal consequence. 14 In line with this; *Beer-lahai-roi* would mean 'well of seeing-alive'. 15 *Hagar bore Abram a son*. On this son Abram's hope would now naturally be set, but this last resort to natural means to bring God's promise to pass will end in disappointment. In this matter of the crucial first heir, the redemptive covenant must be seen as realizable only through the supernaturalism of divine intervention.

17:1 - 18:15 Covenant ratification. 17:1 *Ninety-nine*; cf. 16:16; 17:17, 25. The thought of an heir by Sarai was now a laughing matter (cf. 17:17; 18:12). *The Lord appeared*; cf. v. 22; 12:7; 18:1. *I am God Almighty*. Suzerainty treaties thus began with the titles of the great king (cf. 15:7). The etymology of *šadday* is still uncertain but 'Almighty' conveys its evident sense; cf. 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3; Ex. 6:3; Ezk. 10:5. *Be blameless*; i.e. genuinely and unreservedly committed to God's service (cf. 6:9). 5 *Abraham*, a lengthened form of Abram ('the father is exalted'), is explained, by a sound-play, as *father of a multitude* (Heb. *ab-hāmôn*) of nations. The name's prophetic meaning should not be sought in the Abrahamite nations like the Ishmaelites and Edomites, for the same promise is made to Sarai (v. 16), but rather in the hosts of all nations who become Abraham's children by sharing his covenant faith (cf. Gal. 3:29). 6 *Kings*. The promised line was royal. From it, as to the flesh, came Christ, following His OT precursors, the kings of Israel. 7 *An everlasting covenant*. The covenant had a provisional phase, but in Abraham's Messianic seed (cf. Gal. 3:16) and His kingdom it stands for ever. 8 *I will be their God*. Yahweh creates a people and identifies Himself with them as their Lord.

9 *You shall keep my covenant*. The covenant is law as well as gospel (cf. 12:1; 17:1; 22:2). 10 *Circumcised*. The practice of circumcision found earlier among other peoples was adopted to serve as the sign of incorporation into the Abrahamite covenant. Its continuing significance is learned from the function it performed at its institution. Covenants were ratified by oaths, the oath-curses being dramatized in symbolic rites (cf. 15:9ff.). A characteristic curse was that of cutting off the vassal to destruction and cutting off his name and seed. Accompanying this was a knife rite. So circumcision was the knife rite by which the Abrahamite covenant was cut. 14 shows that it symbolized the curse of excision from the covenant community. More precisely, the circumcision of the male organ of generation symbolized the cutting off of descendants. Yet as the sign of an oath acknowledging God's lordship, circumcision also signified consecration (cf. Rom. 4:11). Ancient vassal covenants included with the vassal king his kingdom and descendants. Similarly, the Lord administered His covenant to Abraham not simply as an individual believer-confessor but as the head of a community,

in this case a family household, including children and slaves (vv. 12f., 23ff.), and that through ongoing generations (vv. 9, 12).

15 *Sarah* is a variant of Sarai, 'princess', but strangely the meaning of the change is not intimated. Curiously, however, the names of both Abram and Sarai are changed by adding the same sound, 'ah-ah', as though God were laughing with the parents-to-be! Combining a pun with His promise He put laughter into their very names: the union of aged Abraham and Sarah will produce Laughter-Isaac (lit. 'he laughs'). 17 *Then Abraham . . . laughed*. The humour of it all did not escape him but, as his next request showed, his laughing was not yet in the free abandon of full faith. 18 *That Ishmael might live*. In covenantal terminology, the aspirant to a vassal throne was made to 'live' if the great king established him on the throne, particularly when he had been 'killed', i.e. rejected in his claims by rivals. Abram, staggered by God's great joke, would settle for Ishmael as the kingdom heir. 20 *Father of twelve princes*. God heard Abraham. Ishmael would receive dynastic status as patriarch over an amphictyonic league, though not over the twelve-tribe kingdom of God. 21 *My covenant with Isaac*. Legally, a natural son, even though born after the son of a slave-wife, became chief heir.

As to occasion, 18:1-15 is connected with 18:16ff. but in theme it is related to ch. 17. The promise of the heir is confirmed in the form found there (cf. 17:21 and 18:10, 14); the covenant ceremonies are evidently supplemented; and the laughter motif is continued and culminated in a remarkable word of God (18:14). 18:1 The Lord's new appearance was soon after the last. The approaching supernatural birth was heralded by repeated angelic visitations. *Mamre*; cf. 13:18; 14:13. 2 The expression *behold, three men* suggests sudden appearance. One of the three was the angel of the Lord (cf. vv. 13, 17; 16:7ff.). 3 Read as in AV, 'My Lord'. The Hebrew *'adonay*, reserved for reference to the divine Lord, is rejected by rsv in favour of *'adonai*, a general polite form of address. But Abraham might be expected to recognize the angel of the Lord after only a brief interval. Does not such recognition explain his addressing this angel? Also the mention of Yahweh in v. 13 were otherwise too abrupt. 5-8 The meal may well have been the confirmation of the covenant relationship (cf. Ex. 24:9-11). Appropriately, then, it is followed by the word of confirmation.

10 *At the tent door behind him*. The Hebrew may also be translated: 'And she was behind it (i.e. the door)'. 12 In either case Sarah's thoughts were secret and her laughter (again the effect of the impossible announcement) concealed within herself. As Jesus' disclosure of Nathanael's private doubts was evidence of greater things to be performed by Him, the Mediator of angelic visitation (Jn. 1:45-51), so Yahweh's manifestation of divine knowledge in the

exposure of Sarah's inner incredulity was a sign that He who came with angel ministrants would perform the greater miracle of bringing life from Sarah's dead womb. 14 *Is anything too hard for the Lord?* His infinite wisdom makes the laughable believable. 15 On Sarah's faith in spite of this fearfully foolish reaction, see Heb. 11:11.

18:16 - 19:38 Lot's separated line. 18:16 A second stage of the heavenly mission (cf. 18:1ff.) began with the departure of Yahweh's two angel servants (recapitulated in v. 22), or better, with God's consultation with them (vv. 17-19) and His declaration to Abraham (vv. 20f.). 17 *Shall I hide from Abraham*. As God's friend (cf. on 12:4) Abraham might hear the secret counsel of His covenant (cf. Ps. 25:14). 19 *Bring . . . what he has promised him*. Abraham was singled out not that the Abrahamites should for ever enjoy greatness as an élite religious enclave, but that they might be the instrument for universalizing the fear of Yahweh with its attendant blessings (cf. v. 18b; 12:3b). *Righteousness and justice* as well as power and blessing characterize God's kingdom. 20, 21 The slight variation between *z'āqā* and *š'āqā*, both translated *outrage*, is brought out by the difference between 'outrage' and 'outrage'. The outrage is either the offence clamouring for punishment (cf. 4:10) or the plea of the oppressed seeking judicial protection. The legal proceedings began with a special investigation (cf. 11:7). The facts were fully known to the Judge and His verdict a foreknown conclusion (cf. 19:13) but the openness of the situation as described in v. 21 suggests that the Sodomites were receiving a final opportunity to repent. 22ff. God's tentative statement also created an opportunity for Abraham to engage in intercession.

25 *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?* Abraham's long faith-struggle with the disparity between historical reality and God's promises had led him to this solid conviction as a foundation for dealing with the problem of divine providence. Abraham was not pleading for individual rather than corporate judicial treatment in God's government of the world. Rather, he understood God's decree against Sodom as an in-breaking of ultimate covenant judgment (cf. Lk. 17:28f.; 2 Pet. 2:6), and such judgment must cut through the ambiguities of general historical associations, so that the community of the righteous is not destroyed with its wicked fellow-citizens. In the case of Sodom, the only way Abraham saw to avoid violating the radical justice required in such judgment was to turn God from His announced purpose. Hence Abraham sought to save Lot (cf. 19:29) by pleading that Sodom be spared. God answered that, if necessary, He would withhold His judgment in order to protect a righteous remnant; but the sequel shows it was not necessary. When God deems iniquity ripe for final judgment, He does not spare; but He does deliver His covenant people out of the

judgment, whether they be fifty or ten or a smaller family (like Noah's or Lot's).

19:1 *In the evening*. Yahweh's messengers appeared at Sodom miraculously soon (cf. 18:22), commissioned to gather in the effect before the descent of doom (cf. Mt. 24:31; Mk. 13:27). 2,3 Lot, though lacking in Abraham's spiritual strength, was a righteous man, at odds with his ungodly environment (cf. 2 Pet. 2:7f.). On v. 2b, cf. Lk. 24:28f. 4 Outside Lot's family there was not one righteous in any quarter of the city; it was worse than Abraham had dared to suggest (cf. 18:32). 5 *That we may know them*; cf. Jdg. 19:22; Rom. 1:27. 8 The warp given to Lot's spiritual and moral perspective by his unhappy choice of Sodom had distorted his judgment, producing vacillation and shockingly confused compromise. 9 The Sodomites' perverse violence confirmed the 'outcry against Sodom' (18:20). 11 *Blindness* (cf. 2 Ki. 6:18) was not so much loss of sight as a sudden striking of the tormentors with a severe disorientation that frustrated their purpose. 12 *Have you any one else here?* The offer of deliverance in terms of family relatedness to Lot is the same as in the case of Noah at the Flood. 13 Cf. 18:21. 14 *Who were to marry his daughters*. The language also allows that the marriages had already taken place and that Lot, therefore, had daughters living with their husbands in addition to the two daughters with him. *Jesting*. Again we have the word *šāhaq* and the idea of laughable divine announcements. Cf. Lk. 17:28f.

16 *The Lord being merciful*. The remnant's imperfections did not thwart the purpose of grace. 22, 23 *Zoar*. The name (*šō'ar*) is related to Lot's designation of it as a trifle (*miš'ar*). This city was evidently located to the S of the area destroyed. All these cities were situated in what is now the shallow southern extension of the Dead Sea. 24 *Brimstone and fire*. Deposits of sulphur (brimstone) and asphalt (cf. 'bitumen pits', 14:10) are found in the coastal area of the Dead Sea. It has been speculated that the ignition of natural gases by lightning, possibly in association with an earthquake disturbance in this rift valley, started the conflagration with its rain of sulphurous fire and the pall of asphalt smoke (v. 28). The destruction would nevertheless be supernatural, for the timing and extent of the fiery havoc were precisely ordered to fulfil the announced word of God and the discriminatory purpose of His judgment. 25 *All the valley* (cf. vv. 28f.). Admah and Zeboim, as well as Sodom and Gomorrah, were overthrown (Dt. 29:23; Je. 49:18; 50:40; Ho. 11:8; cf. Is. 1:9f.; 13:19; Ezk. 16:46ff.). 26 *A pillar of salt*; cf. Lk. 17:32. The salt mass known as Gebel Usdum on the SW shore of the Dead Sea attests to the presence of the agent of encrustation. Archaeological light on the episode is afforded by the site Bab ed-Dra a few miles E of the plain cities and evidently a place of pilgrimage for their citizenry. Use of this site ceased in the 21st century BC. 28 Cf. 13:10.

29 Cf. 2 Pet. 2:9 and comments on 18:23ff. As warrior-prince Abraham had saved Lot earlier (Gn. 14); now he does so as prophetic covenant-mediator (cf. 8:1; 20:7). 30 Fear (perhaps of future seismic episodes) drove Lot into the mountain caves. 31-38 trace the separated line of Lot through his two Sodom-tainted daughters to the Moabites and Ammonites, who increasingly became objects of denunciation by Israel's prophets. Separation from Abraham was separation from the future of the covenant kingdom.

20:1-18 *Protection of the royal family*. The charming divine comedy of Isaac's birth links the laughter of the annunciation (Gn. 17ff.) with the joy of fulfillment (21:1ff.) by a smiling disclosure of Sarah's rejuvenation (the prelude to her conception of Isaac), intimated through the ludicrous episode of Abimelech's passion to include the ninety-year old damsel in his harem and sagacious old Abraham's bemused floundering in difficulties supposedly left behind in long-departed youth (vv. 5, 11ff.).

1 *From there*; cf. 18:1, 33. Some interpret between Kadesh and Shur as the caravan route Abraham plied as a merchant while his alien residency was in Gerar. 2 *My sister*. Cf. on 12:13ff. *Abimelech*. This Gerar dynasty was Philistine (cf. 21:32, 34; 26:1). The Philistines of the patriarchal age had settled into a Semitic way of life. Their relationship to the patriarchs in political covenant (21:22ff.; 26:26ff.) contrasts with the Israelite-Philistine hostility in the period of the judges. Cf. 10:13f.; Am. 9:7. Abimelech was apparently a worshipper of the true God (cf. vv. 3ff.). 3 *A dead man*. Cf. Is. 38:1. Abimelech, as well as his wife and harem, was victim of the sudden affliction (cf. vv. 7, 17). 4, 5 *An innocent people*. Abimelech raised a question similar to Abraham's (cf. 18: 23ff.), but in self-defence. He could plead an innocence of ignorance as to Sarah's married status, but he was nevertheless guiltily responsible for abuse of the marriage ordinance through his harem (cf. 4:19ff.; 6:1ff.). 6b, 7 See Ps. 105:15. *A prophet*. As mediator of God's covenant, Abraham received and communicated God's will and in this relationship had peculiar access for intercession (cf. Jb. 42:8). *You shall surely die*; cf. 2:17; 3:4. Abimelech's act threatened Abraham's promised dynasty and God's threat to Abimelech extended to his dynastic family (cf. on 17:18; Ps. 105:13f.). 9-13 Abraham's embarrassment before Abimelech and a certain similarity discernible between his treatment of Sarah and Lot's offer of his daughters remind us that the divine favour on Abraham too was of grace. 16 *Vindication*; lit. 'covering of eyes', i.e. a means of diverting attention from an offence. By his lavish gifts Abimelech would have Sarah forget her experience in his court. If v. 16d explains v. 16c, the point is that, in spite of indignity suffered, Sarah's honour was by the royal gift restored in the eyes of others.

21:1-34 *Isaac, heir of the covenant*. 1 Cf.

17:21; 18:10, 14. 3 Cf. 17:19. 4 By circumcising Isaac, Abraham consecrated to Yahweh the people of promise. 5 Cf. 17:17. 6, 7 *God has made laughter*. Sarah voiced her magnificat (cf. Ps. 113:9). She repeated the pun on 'Isaac' (cf. 17:17-19), mindful of the astounded laughter others would add to that of the parents. She anticipated that this congratulatory laughter would also be derisive, with herself the butt of the joke (cf. Ezk. 23:32). 8 The weaning feast would be in Isaac's second or third year. 9 Follow AV. The word *šāhaq*, 'mocking', is used again with the overtones of vv. 6b, 7. Ishmael was making a laughing-stock of the royal family on the occasion that highlighted the absurdity Sarah had herself described (cf. v. 7). Paul interpreted this as a persecution of the son of promise (Gal. 4:28f.).

10 On Hagar's household status, see on 16:2ff. According to the law codes, Ishmael was entitled to an inheritance share, but Sarah was determined that Isaac should be sole heir. That could be legally achieved, for there was legal tradition stipulating that a son by a slave woman could forgo his inheritance claim in exchange for freedom. *Cast out*. Sarah would compel them to go free! 11-13 Abraham, though reluctant because of natural affection for Ishmael (cf. 17:18), acceded when so instructed by the Lord. 14-16 *The child*. Ishmael at his expulsion was about sixteen (cf. 16:16; 21:5). Hagar evidently sought for a while to support the fainting youth but his weight proved too much and she was forced to free herself. 17-19 *God heard* is a play on 'Ishmael' (cf. 16:11). By supernatural intervention Hagar was directed to life-saving water. This forestalled failure of God's promises concerning Ishmael made earlier (see 16:12; 17:20; 21:13). 20, 21 Ishmael's marriage to an Egyptian and his nomad roving in the Sinai peninsula underscore the separation of the Ishmaelites from the Abrahamic covenant.

22-24 *At that time*. The Beer-sheba covenant is loosely related to the context; possibly it preceded even Isaac's birth. Pursuant to Abimelech's invitation (20:15), Abraham had settled on what was apparently the border of his jurisdiction. Abimelech, politically and militarily superior, was nevertheless impressed by the divine protection under which Abraham operated and proposed the formal establishment of brotherly relationship. *Phicol* is a Semitic name, meaning 'word of all' (i.e. the gods). 25, 26 Abraham saw in Abimelech's friendly overtures an opportunity to broach the subject of a water source he had prepared but which was then, unknown to Abimelech, seized by his servants. 27-31 The parity covenant was ratified as usual by both parties taking the oath. Other regular features were the use of animals for the covenant cutting and the presence of witnesses. God Himself was the Witness. As a special witness to Abimelech that he had agreed to the special provision acknowledging Abraham's

right to the well, Abraham gave him seven ewe lambs. 32 The name *Beer-sheba* reflects three features of the covenant. *Beer* means 'well'; *seba*, 'seven'; and *nišba*, 'swear'. 33 The tamarisk Abraham planted was probably regarded as another witness. *Everlasting God*. From God's revelation of His covenant as 'everlasting' (17:7f., 13, 19) Abraham learned to worship and trust Him as the immovable foundation of his hope (cf. 12:8; 13:4).

22:1-19 *Death and resurrection of the heir*. 1 *God tested Abraham*. The whole pilgrim way was a continual test, but this was a special test of focal significance (cf. v. 12).

2 *Offer him*. Abraham must go beyond circumcision's partial and symbolic cutting off. By an ultimate consecration of Isaac to God in death-judgment he must demonstrate the truth of his oath of allegiance. The demand laid on Isaac's life reaffirmed God's verdict on man as sinner and so proclaimed the need for deliverance; but it also seemed to cut off the possibility of that deliverance. For the death of the divinely designated seed of promise would terminate the programme of salvation and empty the promise of meaning. Abraham's faith overcame the conflict between obedience and hope by accounting Yahweh able to raise up the sacrificed one (cf. Heb. 11:17-19). *Moriah*; cf. 2 Ch. 3:1, where it is identified with Solomon's Temple site at Jerusalem. 8 *God will provide* does not imply foreknowledge of the outcome, for then there were no trial of faith. 13 *Behold a ram*. In the combination of God's Self-maledictory oath of Gn. 15 (see on 15:17) and this divinely-provided substitute, the vicarious curse-bearing of God's own unspared Son was prefigured (cf. Rom. 8:32). 14 *The Lord will provide* (*yhw h yireh*) refers to the event of v. 13 in the language of v. 8. *It shall be provided*, or '(Yahweh) is seen', i.e. Yahweh appears in order to provide. From the perspective of Isaac's succession rights as vassal king under the Suzerain Yahweh, his virtual death and resurrection (cf. Heb. 11:19) was a deposition and restoration. Interestingly, the figure of death and resurrection is used in ancient treaties to describe just this sort of thing. See on 17:18. 16 *I have sworn, says the Lord*. Cf. 24:7; Ex. 32:13. The remarkable combination of *says the Lord* (*ne'um yhw*) with the divine oath reappears in Ps. 110:1 and 4, an oracle that also concerns royal appointment, here of God's Son, through whom the Gn. 22:15-18 oracle is fulfilled. *Because you have done this*. Cf. v. 18. It was not that by his obedience Abraham merited this blessing. God's rewards are as much acts of His grace as is His original choice of the recipients. Yet by virtue of the special guarantees God was pleased to affix to Abraham's supreme triumph of faith, it stood in a causal relation to the fulfilment of the Abrahamic covenant (cf. 26:3, 5, 24; Ps. 105:42). We are thus taught that Abraham's seed of Old and New Testaments inherit the

world via the righteousness of faith (cf. Rom. 4). 17 Possess the gate of their enemies. Cf. 14:20.

22:20 - 25:11 Royal succession

22:20-24 Nahor's collateral line. Developments in the family of Abraham's northern kinsmen are presented not in formal genealogy but as news received and acted on (cf. 24:4ff.). Terah's son, Nahor, had married a daughter of Haran (cf. 11:27, 29). His grand-daughter Rebekah (cf. 24:15) and great grand-daughters Leah and Rachel became ancestral mothers of God's people Israel. Twelve sons of Nahor are mentioned but an amphictyonic league does not seem implied. The omission of Laban (cf. 24:29) centres attention on Rebekah and this focus on the Israelite ancestresses continues in Gn. 23 and 24.

23:1-20 Sepulchre for the royal family. 2-4 The reference to Canaan prepares for the thought thrust upon Abraham by the exigencies of Sarah's burial—he was still a sojourner in the promised land, not lord, not even a small property owner. He might have followed whatever burial procedure was allowed for aliens, but in the face of his family's dying without receiving the promises (Heb. 11:13) he desired to express his faith in their ultimate reception of the inheritance beyond death (cf. Heb. 11:19). A family sepulchre would not be a legal claim to the possession of Canaan, but it would be a prophetic sign. His request give me property does not mean give without payment. Abraham, though only a resident alien, was requesting the right to acquire property in perpetuity. Similarly, Ephron did not offer a free gift (v. 11). 5 These pre-patriarchal Hittites, one of the early complex of peoples in Canaan (cf. 10:15; 15:20; Dt. 7:1; Jdg. 3:5), were Semitized. If not related to the earlier Hattian people of Anatolia, these Hittites of S Palestine possibly represented a commercial penetration preceding the broader Hittite movement into Anatolia resulting in their Empire there in the mid-second millennium bc. 6 A mighty prince is literally 'a prince of God'. That the Abraham community was God's protectorate was commonly known (cf. 21:22); moreover, this community was sizeable and its leader very wealthy (cf. 24:1, 34).

9 Cave of Machpelah. According to provisions found in the Hittite law code and apparently more generally followed, a landholder continued to be responsible for the dues on a recognized unit of property unless he disposed of it in its entirety. Abraham would avoid transfer of these obligations to himself by purchasing only the cave at the end of his (Ephron's) field, while Ephron insisted on selling the entire unit—field and cave—as the conclusion repeatedly notes (vv. 17, 19, 20; cf. 49:29ff.). Thus, in becoming a property owner in Canaan, Abraham had to acknowledge more publicly than ever the currently more ultimate proprietorship over this land enjoyed by the

Canaanite authorities, rendering to them now his land dues.

24:1-67 A queen for Abraham's co-regent. 1 Sarah's death and Abraham's own advanced years (cf. 17:17; 23:1; 25:20) suggested the timeliness of a final disposition, securing to Isaac the covenant blessings of land and descendants. 2 Under my thigh is an allusion to the genital organ. This oath gesture probably had reference to the malediction symbolized by circumcision. The charge given the servant contains the last recorded words of Abraham; this also points to its testamentary nature. 3 Not . . . from the daughters of the Canaanites. The inheritance of Canaan must come to Abraham's descendants, not as a natural development through intermarriage with the Canaanites, but as a supernatural gift through divine judgment on the Canaanites. In fact, intermarriage would frustrate the promised kingdom programme, for the Abrahamites, thus compromised and corrupted, would fall under judgment with the Canaanites. 6-8 Nor take my son back. God had issued the summons to Canaan and there the covenant patriarchs must exercise their faith-reign unless God Himself ordained otherwise. Scripture's last quotation of Abraham is fittingly a word of faith in the Lord's faithfulness to His promises. 10 City of Nahor; i.e. Haran (cf. 29:4 and above on 11:26ff.). 14 The proposing of a sign to discover the elect mother of Israel belongs to an era of special revelation (cf. v. 7).

15ff. God's answer (vv. 15-25) surpassed the prayer (vv. 12-14), evoking doxology (vv. 26f.). With v. 15, cf. 22:20ff. Though the servant was not yet informed that Rebekah was of Abraham's kindred (vv. 23f.; cf. vv. 4, 38) she had fulfilled the prayer-sign, and his gifts (v. 21) marked a preliminary recognition of her as the appointed bride. Laban's prominence (v. 29; cf. v. 53; 25:20) and Bethuel's secondary role (cf. vv. 15, 24, 50) reflect a fraternal arrangement in which the jurisdiction over the brothers and sisters is given to one brother. 50, 51 Rebekah's family was impressed, like the Hebron Hittites and Abimelech, with the divine protectorate enjoyed by Abraham, and could not oppose this mission, even had the marriage not been so obviously favourable. 58 I will go. The sister's consent to a proposed marriage in a fraternal situation is attested in a marriage record from Nuzi. 60 The family's farewell blessing was formally similar to the blessing already promised to the Abrahamites by God (cf. 22:17). 62-67 The account of the conclusion of the mission, prospered by the Lord, concentrates on Isaac to the exclusion of Abraham and specifically depicts Rebekah as Sarah's successor (v. 67, AV). Isaac is thus portrayed as already patriarchal co-regent. Agreeably, the steward over all Abraham's household calls Isaac my master (v. 65; cf. v. 36).

25:1-11 Isaac's succession. The interest of this closing narrative of Abraham's life is on the

clearing of Isaac's exclusive claim to covenant inheritance (vv. 1-6) and his succession as covenant patriarch (vv. 7-11).

1 The marriage with Keturah may have occurred during Sarah's lifetime, chronological sequence yielding again to topical arrangement. Since within three years of Sarah's death Abraham was reckoning seriously with the possibility that his own death was nigh (cf. 24:1ff.), the relationship described in vv. 1-6 is improbable after Sarah's death. Also, Keturah is called a 'concubine' (1 Ch. 1:32; cf. v. 6). 2-4 The Keturah tribes are traceable to NW Arabia; cf. above on 17:5. 6 Sons of his concubines; perhaps the plural is abstract, i.e. 'concubinage'. He sent them away. This dismissal may have occurred at Ishmael's expulsion or, more probably, when Isaac became co-patriarch with Abraham (v. 5, cf. above on 24:62-67). 8 Cf. 15:15; Heb. 11:13. Was gathered to his people. This is the sequel to death; it is not a reference to burial (cf. vv. 9f.; 35:29; 49:33 and 50:13). 11 God blessed Isaac. According to promise (17:21) the son born in Abraham's hundredth year was confirmed over the covenant inheritance in the hundredth year after Abraham entered the land.

25:12-18 THE GENERATIONS OF ISHMAEL

Ishmael had been the subject of particular divine promises made to Hagar (16:10ff.) and Abraham (17:20; 21:13). The fulfilment in Ishmael's descendants is noted before the history of the Abrahamic kingdom proceeds. In this control of mankind outside the line of promise it is again manifested that Yahweh, Lord of the Abrahamic covenant, is God of all the earth, directing all history by His sovereign providence. 16 By their villages and by their encampments. The more settled and the wandering Ishmaelites are thus distinguished. Twelve princes. This suggests a sacred-political confederation (cf. 17:20). 18 Their nomadic sphere was far-flung across the NW Arabian wilderness and was threateningly hostile (cf. 16:12), not least to the Israelites (Jdg. 6:33ff.; especially Jdg. 8:24; cf. Jdg. 7:12 with Gn. 25:18b; Ps. 83:6).

25:19 - 35:29 THE GENERATIONS OF ISAAC

25:19a This heading is joined to the subsequent narrative in the same way as the 11:27 heading. Also, just as the 'generations of Terah' centred at once on Abraham, so the 'generations of Isaac' focus upon Jacob. Isaac occupies a more significant position than Terah, however, who stood merely at the genealogical source, the notice of his death coming early in the section (11:32). Isaac, heir of Abraham, dwelling prosperously in Canaan afforded a picture of covenant fulfilment. Moreover, he

stands as patriarchal head over the whole history of this era, the record of his death closing this section (35:29).

25:19b - 28:9 Isaac's inheritance and heir

25:19b-34 Election of Jacob. 20 Aramean of Paddan-aram. The line leading to Israel, though directly traced to Shem through Arpachshad rather than Aram, had become associated with Aramaeans (cf. Dt. 26:5). 21 The barrenness of Isaac's wife and most of the other recorded features of Isaac's life are similar to experiences of Abraham and served the same disciplinary purposes of faith. 22 Went to inquire. Rebekah, as perhaps Isaac too, had recourse to a sanctified place, probably one of the patriarchal altars, in her distressed calling on God. Why, she wondered, had God healed her barrenness, if the issue of her conception would be unhappy, as the inner struggle made her fear it would. 23 The elder shall serve the younger. Cf. 9:25-27. By divine pre-appointment a place in the Abraham-Isaac succession was conferred on the younger of the struggling twins. Prenatal appointment of the son of a particular bride to the official position of firstborn, in preference to sons by another wife and irrespective of actual primogeniture, is attested in the Ancient Near East. See Rom. 9:10-12. 25 Red ('admoni) anticipates the later play on Esau's other name, Edom (cf. v. 30). Hairy ('se'ar) is the basis of the name-pun, Esau ('esaw); cf. also Seir ('se'ir). 26 Heel ('aqeb) is used to explain Jacob ('ya'aqob'), found also in contemporary extra-biblical sources and meaning 'he (God) protects'.

29-34 The divine oracle, confirmed by this birth-omen, began to be fulfilled in Esau's sale of his birthright to Jacob. The birthright regularly conveyed a double inheritance share. In this family the entire 'blessing of Abraham' (28:4), the covenant patriarchate, was involved. From Nuzi comes evidence of the transfer of a prospective inheritance share of real property from one brother to another in exchange for a few sheep. Perhaps it was only the double share that Jacob could thus secure by barter; for later both brothers sought Isaac's testamentary blessing, evidently to secure family headship and a generally prosperous prospect (Gn. 27). 34 Cf. Heb. 12:16. Esau's name Edom identifies him with his profane preference for the red stuff ('adom) in the pot. It could only have been in spite of Jacob's unworthy behaviour that he was the object of God's elective love (cf. Mal. 1:2f.).

26:1-33 Isaac under the Lord's protectorate. These episodes follow Abraham's death (see vv. 1, 15, 18) but the earlier of them possibly preceded the birthright exchange (cf. 25:29ff.). Their position between the two supplanting episodes suggests their purpose is to portray the inheritance Jacob coveted. 2-4 The prohibition, turning Isaac from trust in the arm of Egypt, compelled him to look alone unto the

special providence of God, who confirmed to him the Abrahamic covenant (cf. v. 12). Here was the lesson needed by grasping young Jacob, too! 5 Cf. above on 22:16. 6-11 Cf. above on 12:13ff. and 20:1ff. Since *Abimelech* was evidently a Philistine dynastic title (cf. 1 Sa. 21:11 and the heading of Ps. 34), this need not be the individual Abraham encountered in Gerar decades before. He is of similar character, however, and the advanced age he would have reached would explain why Rebekah's jeopardy is related to the Gerarites, not to a royal harem. Abimelech's chance discovery of Isaac 'sporting' (v. 8; AV translation of *m'zayehg*, the name-pun again) with Rebekah speaks anew of sovereign divine protection. 12-16 God's special oversight in the face of famine and Philistine harassment (see vv. 14, 15) resulted in such agricultural success and general prosperity that the pilgrim aliens overshadowed the native city-state (v. 16).

18-22 Cf. 21:25ff. The encampments at 'Contention' (*Esek*) and 'Enmity' (*Sitnah*) led to the spacious, fruitful peace of 'Room' (*Rehoboth*). 23 Again at *Beer-sheba*, where Abraham had dug a well and resided, Isaac's servants found new water sources (cf. vv. 25, 32). 24, 25 Here God renewed the covenant guarantees, prompting Isaac's special cultic acknowledgment of his Lord (cf. 21:33). 26 Concerning *Phicol* (cf. 21:22) the same possibilities of identity exist as for Abimelech (see above on v. 8). 27-31 The Abimelech-Isaac covenant renewed the Abimelech-Abraham covenant (cf. especially 21:23). Out of the mouths of the Philistines God brought a witness that His promise concerning Isaac in Philistine country (cf. v. 3) had been fulfilled. Having registered his complaint, Isaac suffered his visitors to gloss diplomatically over the border incidents and consented to the parity treaty, ratified by a covenant meal and a mutual oath. 33 *Shibah* is, like 'Shebah', a form of the number seven; thus Isaac confirmed the name given by Abraham. There is also in the context a word play on the oath-taking (*nišba'*) of v. 31 (cf. v. 32, *that same day*). Thus out of the reluctant ear and disgruntled men the Lord had wrested for Isaac an earnest of paradise.

26:34 - 28:9 Isaac's testamentary blessings. Bracketing the account of Esau's loss of the firstborn's blessing are records of his marriage alliances outside the line of promise (26:34f. and 28:6-9). His first marriage possibly preceded some Isaac episodes which are described in Gn. 26.

27:2 *Behold I am old*. This was legal terminology for introducing final testaments. Isaac was 137 years old and lived forty years longer (cf. 35:28). Isaac's purpose to give Esau the blessing (vv. 1-4) and Rebekah's scheme to divert it to Jacob (vv. 5-17) stemmed from the spirit of favoritism (cf. 25:28).

20 *The Lord . . . granted me success*. The deceiver, vainly taking God's name, spoke more

truth than he realized. 23 *So he blessed him* is the outcome; 24-29 supply the details. Rebekah's comprehensive deceit was directed to all Isaac's remaining senses, except hearing; but touch, taste and smell silenced his ears. Isaac's poetic blessing (vv. 27b-29) does not adhere to previous promise terminology. It is as though the ambiguity of the situation prevented a more forthright formulation. Yet the covenant blessing was encompassed in the headship over Isaac's household (cf. above on 25:23); other features included were the paradise land, nationhood with dominion and mediatorship of divine judgment. Cf. Heb. 11:20. 33 *Yes, and he shall be blessed*. Legal evidence from Nuzi shows that oral wills delivered by a dying father and cited in court were of decisive validity. They had an oath character (cf. v. 7, 'before the Lord'). Isaac was stunned by the recognition that in spite of his own purpose to the contrary the prenatal oracle (cf. 25:23) had been made effective through the inspired testament he had uttered in irreversible legal form. 34ff. Cf. Heb. 12:17. 36 *Supplanted*; from Hebrew *'aqab*, 'take by the heel'. Dismayed Esau saw the event as a repetition of the birthright exchange, a fulfilment of the birth-omen, and an explanation of Jacob's name (cf. 25:26; Je. 9:4; Ho. 12:3). 39, 40 *Away from the fatness*. The preposition (*min*) means either 'of' (as in Jacob's blessing, v. 28) or 'away from'; the latter is required here by the context and by Edomite history (cf. too Mal. 1:3). Edom's mountains discouraged cultivation; their inhabitants were driven from the ploughshare to the sword (cf. 25:27). Israel dominated Edom, especially from the monarchy onward (cf. Nu. 24:18; 2 Sa. 8:14), but Edom was periodically successful in independence efforts.

41ff. The sins of all concerned in the business of the blessing began at once to take their toll. To deliver Jacob from Esau's vengeance (v. 41), Rebekah, expert at scheming, was obliged to deliver her favourite over to her similarly talented brother Laban (vv. 43ff.), and apparently died before it was propitious to recall Jacob (v. 45; cf. 49:31). 46 Her shrewd approaches to both Jacob and Isaac (cf. 26:34f.), appealing to their concern for her happiness, ironically led them to bring upon her precisely the evils from which they sought to spare her.

28:1ff. See on 24:3. 4 *Blessing of Abraham*. The atmosphere had sufficiently cleared by the time of this farewell confirmation of the testamentary blessing for Isaac to identify Jacob's blessing forthrightly as that which God bestowed in the Abrahamic covenant. The mission to secure a wife prompted an emphasis on the blessing of numerous progeny. The language echoes Gn. 17 especially, including the divine designation, *'el sadday* (see on 17:1). On 4b, cf., e.g., 17:8a; 26:3 and contrast 27:28. 5 summarily anticipates 10ff. before this section on Isaac's patriarchal activities closes. 6-9 Esau's choice of an Ishmaelite wife (cf. 26:34f.; 36:3) showed

regard for Isaac, yet underscored his separation from the Abrahamic inheritance.

28:10 - 35:29 Jacob's Syrian sojourn and return

28:10-22 God's covenant with Jacob. This era forms a circle from the ratification of God's covenant protectorship over Jacob at Bethel back to Bethel and the confirmation of that covenant (35:1-15). 10 *Left Beersheba . . . toward Haran*; cf. 26:23; 28:5. Jacob's actual enjoyment of the patriarchal office was long postponed. In his flight from Canaan, patriarchal history reverted to its beginnings among the idolatrous Terahites, necessitating a new summons to Canaan. So Jacob was rebuked for his supplanting tactics. 12 *Ladder*; better 'ramp' or 'staircase', like those on the artificial temple mounds or ziggurats leading from the god's dwelling at the top to men below. The Hebrew suggests that the ramp extended both towards earth and heaven, rather than that it was supported, like the Babel structure, upon the cursed earth. It anticipated the heavenly city that descends from above (cf. v. 17; Rev. 21:2, 10). *Angels of God*; cf. 11:7; 18:2; Ho. 12:4f. They ascended with the results of their earthly reconnaissance (cf. Zc. 1:11) and descended to execute God's will. 13, 14 'Beside him' (see rsv mg.; Heb. *'alāyw*) is better than *above it* (i.e. the staircase); cf. 35:13. The angel of the Lord stood there, sent by God, yet Himself God, revealed and present to Jacob; cf. Jn. 1:51. God's covenant disclosure contained the standard treaty features of preamble with identifying title and, in His Self-identification as God of Abraham and Isaac, a virtual historical prologue recalling His mercies to the patriarchal dynasty (v. 13b). The full-orbed covenant inheritance, already conveyed through Isaac's inspired blessing, was now directly confirmed by the Lord (vv. 13c, 14).

15 *Wherever you go*. The divine protectorate over Jacob extended, as did Yahweh's power, beyond the special domain of Canaan. The promise of guardianship during Jacob's sojourn, with guarantee of return, was the Lord's explanation of the dream symbolism. 19 *Bethel*, 'house of God' (cf. v. 17), the name Jacob gave to the revelation site, was extended afterwards to the nearby city of Luz (cf. Jos. 16:2; 18:13), already called Bethel, by way of anticipation, in Gn. 12:8 and 13:3. 20 *Vow*. Jacob ratified the covenant with a vow of allegiance pledging his tributary tithe. Cf. vv. 14, 20, 22. 21 The last clause is (contrary to rsv) part of Jacob's account of what God would do for him; Jacob's own promise begins in v. 22. 22 *Pillar . . . God's house*. Cf. v. 18. There is evidence outside the Bible also of pillars associated with covenants being called 'house of God'. See also 35:7, 15. This proved to be Jacob's Damascus road vision of the Lord. It turned the circumcised son of the covenant from seeking salvation by works to securing it through a faith-struggle that led to a new name.

29:1 - 30:24 Origins of the tribal fathers. 29:1-12 The circumstances of the origins of the twelve tribes advertise the purely gracious character of Israel's election. The special superintendence promised at Bethel led Jacob directly to the bride-to-be, Rachel (v. 6). Attraction to Rachel and eagerness to commend himself somehow to Laban (for he lacked the lavish credentials of the steward who came for Rebekah) inspired Jacob to impressive feats of gallantry (vv. 9f.) in defiance of local custom (vv. 3, 8). 13 The potential of service in such a man brought Laban running again (cf. 24:29ff.) 14 *You are my bone and my flesh*. This expression found in ancient adoption forms is one of the details suggesting that Laban adopted Jacob. At Jacob's arrival, sons of Laban are not mentioned; a daughter was tending the sheep. See further below on 30:25ff.; 31:1ff., 14ff., 19ff. 15 Whatever Jacob's technical status was, as exploited by Laban it became an oppressive servitude. Under pretence of generosity Laban modified the family relationship, in which an uncalculating generosity might be expected of him, by reducing Jacob to a hired labourer's condition.

18 Aware of Jacob's love for Rachel, Laban would forestall the request that she be given in marriage, as daughters sometimes were to adopted sons. He greedily anticipated the generous bridal present that love would offer. 21ff. Worse still, in crude disdain of holy ordinance, human dignity, and all natural feeling he contrived to double his bargain, making love pay its extravagant price twice. The Nuzi tablets (including texts dealing with adoption) attest the wedding gift of a handmaid to a daughter (cf. vv. 24, 29). 31 *Rachel was barren*. After Leah's wedding week but before the second seven years of his service, Jacob received Rachel as a second wife. 32-35 To Leah, the unloved bride of deception, the first of the tribal fathers were born amid family tensions and disharmony. *Reuben*; cf. *ra'ā . . . b'onyi*, '(the Lord) has looked upon my affliction'. *Simeon*; cf. *šāma*, '(the Lord) has heard'. *Levi*; cf. *yillāweh*, '(my husband) will be joined'. *Judah*; cf. *'ōdeh*, 'I will praise'. From two of these sons of Leah arose the royal-Messianic and priestly tribes in Israel.

30:2 *Am I in the place of God?* Some budding sense of dependence on the covenant Lord emerges in Jacob's exasperated retort. 3 On concubinage as a customary practice in cases of a wife's barrenness, see above on 16:2. *Upon my knees*. Placing the infant on the knees (normally of the father, though here of the adoptive mother) signified acknowledgment. 6 *Dan*; cf. *dānāni*, '(God) has judged me', i.e. intervened as her defender. 8 *Naphtali*; cf. *naṣṣīlāy* 'elōhīm nīṣṣālāy', lit. 'wrestlings of God I have wrestled'. The periods covered by 29:32-35 and 30:1-8 probably overlapped. The chronological relation of 30:9-13 (which, of course, follows 29:32-35) to 30:1-8 is uncertain. 9 So intense

was the sisters' struggle for supremacy that Leah, though four times a mother, matched Rachel's strategy of concubinage. 11 *Gad*; cf. *bāḡād*, 'with fortune'. 13 *Asher*; cf. *bē'ōšri*, 'with my happiness' and *'išš-rūnī*, 'they will call me happy'.

14ff. *Mandrakes*, known as an aphrodisiac, were Rachel's next strategem to overcome her barrenness, but proved ineffectual; in fact, her plan became the occasion of increasing her rival's advantage. 17 *God hearkened to Leah*. Again the record stresses the true source of life's blessing. 18 *Issachar*; cf. *šēkārī*, 'my hire' and *šākōr šēkārīkā* (v. 16), 'I have hired you'. 20 *Zebulun*; cf. *zēbed*, 'gift' and *yizbēlēnī*, from a root of uncertain meaning. 21 Cf. 37:35; 46:7. 22 *God hearkened to her*. Rachel eventually sought the blessing aright. 24 *Joseph*; cf. *'āsaḡ*, '(God) has removed' (v. 23) and *yōšēp*, 'may (the Lord) add' (v. 24). Chronologically, vv. 14-20 overlap part of vv. 10-13 and vv. 22-24 precede v. 21 and probably overlap vv. 19f.

30:25-43 Despoiling the oppressor. 25 When the fourteen years of bride payments were completed (cf. 31:41), Joseph's birth coinciding with this, Jacob desired to return to Canaan where his inheritance through Isaac awaited him. By now, natural sons had been born to Laban (cf. 31:1), replacing Jacob as chief heirs (cf. above on 15:4 and 29:14ff.), and Jacob's prospects of counter-balancing his deteriorated inheritance share by negotiating a favourable new contract with wily Laban were dim. 26 *Let me go*. Laban's permission was necessary for Jacob to leave with the family for which he had paid by his service. It resembled the case of a departing slave (cf. Ex. 21:2ff.). One explanation is that the service contracts were operating in subordination to an adoption relationship that made Jacob's independent proprietorship contingent on Laban's death (cf. 31:43). 27-33 At Laban's insistence Jacob suggested an arrangement for continued service. His wages would be the sports appearing among Laban's flocks. 34-36 Since these were relatively rare Laban readily agreed, immediately instituting measures that reduced further the odds of any dark, spotted lambs appearing among the normally white sheep or any kids with white markings among the normally dark goats. 37-43 Jacob's counter-measures accorded with the theory of prenatal conditioning by visual impressions. These verses condense six years' history (cf. 31:41) during which Laban repeatedly imposed changing stipulations (31:7f.) in a vain attempt to stem the tide of Jacob's wealth, mounting at his expense (vv. 42f.). The success of Jacob's strategy was attributable to the special providential favour of the God of Bethel (cf. 31:9ff.).

31:1-55 Exodus. Jacob's labours of the first fourteen years increased Laban's estate (cf. 30:27, 30), but their effect now was to diminish the inheritance of Laban's natural sons (vv. 1f.). Jacob's determination to leave, however, was

not merely his reaction to his rivals' increasing hostility but his response to God's special directions (v. 3; cf. v. 13). His appeal to his wives (vv. 3ff.) referred apparently to an earlier dream revelation (vv. 10-12) and a more recent divine command (v. 13; cf. v. 3), though the two are not distinctly distinguished. Rachel and Leah accepted Jacob's explanation of his enrichment as the blessing of God (vv. 5, 7, 9, 11f., 16) and honoured his divine commissioning (v. 16), perhaps the more easily because of the congruence of God's command with plots that had crossed their own minds. For Laban had shown no disposition to bestow on them any part of the bridal price (i.e. the wealth that accrued to him through Jacob's services) as was normally done in that area (v. 14f.). Accordingly, they reckoned that what God was now taking from their father and giving to their husband was no more than their own (v. 16). It was Laban's own precaution (cf. 30:36; 31:19) that provided Jacob with his opportunity to lead his whole household away stealthily (vv. 17ff.).

19 *Household gods*. Rachel probably stole these 'teraphim' (rv) when Jacob sent her (cf. v. 4), anticipating his plan. Since adoption tablets stipulated that the chief heir should receive the father's gods, possession of them conveyed some legal advantage in respect of inheritance. Adoption texts also stipulate that the gods belonged to real sons born subsequent to the adoption. In the contemptuous treatment given these figurines by the fugitives (cf. especially v. 34) Laban's gods were judged with him. 23 Laban's pursuit covered about 300 miles. Jacob's company had ten days to cover somewhat less than that, for he would have stationed his flocks strategically for departure. 24 The night before Laban overtook Jacob, God intervened decisively (cf. vv. 29, 42), warning the pursuer from pressing his enforceable legal claims against Jacob in any way whatsoever (cf. *either good or bad*). The Lord's role was thus that of Kinsman-Protector securing release for the virtual slave (cf. the 6 years, 31:41; Dt. 15:12). 32-35 The extreme penalty proposed and Laban's agitation show the great legal importance of the teraphim. Laban's futile attempt to prove his accusation created an excellent opportunity for the defence and Jacob pressed the advantage with a passionate statement of the moral case in his favour (vv. 36-42).

39 *I bore the loss*. According to Hammurabi's laws, a shepherd who presented the remnants as evidence was not liable for the losses Jacob describes. 42 *Empty-handed*. Laban would have dismissed Jacob, not with festive music (cf. v. 27), but with less consideration than was due to a slave (cf. Dt. 15:13f.). Jacob's self-vindication became a confession of his avenging God. 43-54 *All... is mine*. Laban stated the legal fact (cf. above on 30:26), but afraid to defy God's warning abandoned his case and under pretence of paternal magnanimity suggested a mutual non-

aggression pact (vv. 44ff.). God was the real covenant Witness (vv. 49f., 53); the pillar and cairn (vv. 45-52), named by each of the apparently bilingual participants in his native tongue (vv. 47f.), were symbolic witnesses. Each man bound himself by oath (v. 52f.), Laban identifying Nahor's and Abraham's God in a Terahite syncretism (v. 53a; cf. 12:1), but Jacob invoking God by a name related distinctly to the Abrahamic covenant. The covenant meal (vv. 46, 54) sealed the arrangement. The stipulation against taking other wives (v. 50) is also found in extra-biblical marriage contracts. The invoking of divine oversight (v. 49) arose from mutual suspicion and sought protection not for the other but for themselves from the other's malice.

32:1 - 33:17 Victory in Transjordan. 32:1 Cf. 28:12ff. 2 The two armies referred to by the name *Mahanaim* (see also rsv mg.) are possibly the angels and Jacob's company. If 32:11f. (Heb., 2f.) belongs chronologically within the course of events described in vv. 3ff., the two armies might be the angels and Esau's force (cf. 2 Ki. 6:15ff.). The site of Mahanaim might then closely adjoin Peniel. 3 On Esau as a threat, cf. 27:41ff. Esau had been establishing himself in Seir (cf. 36:6ff.). 6-8 The advance mission's report to Jacob was ominous enough to prompt immediate defensive tactics of a kind common to caravans. 9-12 Jacob's prayer with its self-effacement and reliance on God for the fulfilment of previous promises evidences the inner work of transformation that inevitably accompanies the election of grace. *This Jordan*. (Heb. *Yardēn*) may here have its generic meaning, 'river'. *Two companies* is a further play on 'Mahanaim'. 13-21 Improving on the preliminary arrangements (cf. vv. 7f.), Jacob sent ahead a generous present of cattle selected in proper proportions for breeding. 22 He then immediately forded the Jabbok. This verse is an opening summary, the details following in vv. 23ff. 23 Actually Jacob himself, after sending his family across, was to remain the night where he was (cf. v. 13). 24 Before entering the land of inheritance, he must undergo an experience that sealed him as a man of faith and pointed him by a mysterious sign to the ultimate source of saving blessings. *A man*. It was the captain of the Lord's hosts (cf. vv. 1f. and Jos. 5:13f.; Ho. 12:3). *Wrestled* (Heb. *wayyē'ābēq*) puns on Jabbok. In the Near East law cases were sometimes settled by an ordeal or test (cf. Nu. 5:11-31). One mode of this was combat by wrestling. The encounter reveals the fundamental character of the quest for God's kingdom as a struggle by fallen men for justification. In this ordeal the outward course of the wrestling was a reflex of the concurrent spiritual encounter. 25, 26 *He did not prevail against Jacob*. The divine Adversary was also the electing-saving Lord who strengthened Jacob with grace to wrestle on against Himself lest he be overcome and condemned! So by per-

sistence in believing supplication Jacob emerged from the ordeal with a blessing (cf. Ho. 12:4). *He touched* (Heb. *nāga' b-*) may signify 'smote' (cf. vv. 31f.). The justification was achieved through suffering. Since the thigh was regarded as the seat of the reproductive powers, the smiting of Jacob's thigh was a sign of the smiting of that descendant of Jacob who should be smitten of God (Is. 53:4) and by His sufferings and overcoming justify Jacob and all God's elect (Is. 53:11). The angel's desire to depart before daylight expressed God's concern lest Jacob perish through beholding His face unobscured by the darkness (cf. 16:13; Ex. 33:20; Jdg. 6:22f.; 13:22). With reference to this Jacob named the site *Peniel*, 'the face of God' (v. 30). 28 *Israel*. This name is found also in the Ugaritic texts. The divine element ('*el*', 'God') would normally be subject, i.e. 'God strives' (cf. rsv mg.) but a different sense is assigned here (i.e. 'He strives with God'). Jacob had prevailed over Esau; now, over God (cf. Ho. 12:3). 29, 30 In his new name, Israel, Jacob's query was already answered (cf. too Jdg. 13:17f.), as his response shows.

33:3 Sevenfold bowing was a widely attested form of homage, fit for a king. 4-9 By the blessing of Him in whose hand is even the heart of kings (cf. 31:34; Pr. 21:1) the dreaded meeting proved a reconciling reunion. Ignoring the servants' explanations (cf. 32:17ff.), Esau yet acknowledged Jacob's offer, so as to decline it (v. 9). 10, 11 Jacob urged him to accept, because Esau's acceptance of so substantial a gift would give formal expression to his acquiescence in Jacob's possession of the disputed inheritance, and would serve as a deterrent to any future rekindling of hostility. *Like seeing the face of God*. Jacob recognized through Esau's reconciled countenance that the God of Peniel was making His face shine upon him. 12-16 Hence he felt no need for the armed protection Esau offered; besides, he was unwilling to incur obligation to Esau. 17 Jacob continued in the Transjordan area for a possibly prolonged period; close to a decade must have elapsed between departure from Syria and the Shechem episode (cf. 34:1).

33:18 - 34:31 Entry into Canaan. 33:18 *On his way from Paddan-aram* (cf. 35:9). A long period is thus characterized by its opening act; cf. 'in their going forth from Egypt' (Dt. 4:45; 23:4; Jos. 5:4). *Safely*, or 'in peace'; not as an invader but according to agreement (cf. v. 19; 34:21). 19 For the faith involved in Jacob's purchase, see above on Abraham's purchase of Machpelah (Gn. 23). 20 Recognizing his return as fulfilment of covenant promise (cf. 28:15), Jacob erected an altar near Shechem, as had Abram on his arrival (12:7). Cf. Jos. 8:30. *El-Elohe-Israel*. Using his new name, Israel, Jacob confessed that El (cf. Isaac's use of this divine designation in blessing Jacob, 28:3) was his God (cf. 28:21).

34:1 *Dinah* must have been some 14 years old, but cannot have been more; she was born

after Leah's four sons (cf. 30:21), and Joseph, who was about a year older than Dinah, was only seventeen at the later occasion recorded in 37:2. **2 Hivite**; cf. 10:17. **5** The fraternal practices of Laban's household re-emerge when Jacob defers to Dinah's brothers (no doubt to Leah's sons particularly) in the handling of her abduction (vv. 5, 7, 13ff.). **7 In Israel**. The author saw the nation budding in the expanding community of Jacob's household. **10** The privileges Hamor offered were the same as those which figure in directives regulating the activities of Hittite merchants in foreign lands. **13 Deceitfully**. Though it was the brothers' duty to secure Dinah's release (cf. v. 26b), resort to the stratagems of war was not justifiable. **14-17** Reprehensible also was their demeaning of the covenant sign of circumcision. **20-24** Hamor's successfully diplomatic camouflage, persuading the Shechemite council to approve its own doom, viewed the proposed arrangements as a confederation whose level of prosperity would exceed that of the Shechemites by themselves (v. 23). **25-31** The vengeance exacted by Jacob's sons was a ruthless aggression in violation of the law of exact retribution for the crime, mercilessly multiplying the very offence (cf. especially v. 29b) alleged as their excuse (vv. 27b, 31). Jacob's reproof of the two instigators of the atrocity stressed the folly of imperilling their own households (v. 30), but how thoroughly he reprobated their deed appears in the curse he uttered in his final testament (cf. 49:5-7).

35:1-15 Covenant renewal. **1** In the crisis precipitated by the Shechem massacre (34:25ff.) Jacob's divine Protector intervened with directions and defence (cf. v. 5). He summoned Jacob back to Bethel, the site of His original covenant revelation to him, for the fulfilment of his vow (cf. 28:20ff.; 31:13). **2 Jacob said**. Jacob's authority over his own covenant household continued even though the fraternal approach had been accommodated (cf. on 34:5). **Put away the foreign gods**. Exclusive devotion to the Suzerain was the covenant's first stipulation. Cf. 31:19. **Purify**. On the process of ritual sanctification, cf. Ex. 19:10. **4 Rings**. These would be amulets with idolatrous significance. **Near Shechem**. At a later covenant renewal here, Joshua similarly demanded the removal of foreign gods, recalling the idolatry of Israel's ancestral household beyond Euphrates (Jos. 24:1ff., 23). **5 The terror from God**, gripping Israel's foes with irrational paralysis or panic, was the work of the angel of the Lord, going before them (cf. Ex. 23:23, 27; Gn. 32:1ff.). **7** The altar, *El-bethel*, witnessed to the Lord's sovereign faithfulness. **8 Cf. 24:59**. **9** The renewal of the covenant in vv. 9ff. made appropriate Jacob's renewal of the name of the site (v. 15; cf. 28:19). On the theophany (cf. v. 13), cf. 28:12ff. **10-12** God summarized His previous revelations to Jacob: the name-blessing, Israel, and the promise of royal nationhood in Abraham's land (cf. 17:1b, 4ff.; 28:13f.). The

traditional elements of treaty-making are found here in God's words: His title, the stipulations and sanctions, the historical prologue (cf. the dominant motif: from Bethel to Bethel). *Be fruitful and multiply*. Incorporation of the creation mandate (cf. 1:28) in place of the usual promise of descendants indicates that the Abrahamic covenant was in continuation of the original, broadly human programme of the creation covenant. **14** The stone *pillar* was the customary covenant witness (cf. Jos. 24:26f.).

35:16-29 Dynastic succession. This closing section of 'the generations of Isaac' is concerned with matters affecting the family leadership, immediately and in the future. The account of Benjamin's birth (vv. 16ff.) rounds out the record of the twelve tribal leaders' origins. The twelve are then listed according to their mothers (vv. 23ff.) and thus according to legal rather than chronological priorities. A notice is inserted of Reuben's offence (v. 22) by which he forfeited the birthright (cf. v. 23; 49:4). Isaac's death (v. 29) meant Jacob's succession as covenant patriarch.

17b Cf. 30:24. **19 On the way to Ephrath**. En route between the sojourn at Bethel and more prolonged sojourn near Bethlehem (vv. 21f.) Rachel died in childbirth and was buried. According to 1 Sa. 10:2 (cf. Je. 31:15) the place was possibly near, even north, of Jerusalem. **27 At Mamre**. Since his return from Paddan-aram and before locating in the Hebron area (cf. 37:14), Jacob may well have visited Isaac there. **28** Isaac lived some twelve years after this reunion. **29** His burial found his twin sons at peace.

36:1 - 37:1 THE GENERATIONS OF ESAU

Before the history of the central line of Jacob proceeds, a brief survey of Esau's branch line is made. It displays the carrying forward of God's revealed purpose concerning Esau (cf. 25:23) and of Isaac's inspired blessing on him (cf. 27:39f.). Jacob's sons were listed individually in summary of their origins in Paddan-aram (35:23-26) and later are listed again as en route to Egypt with their nearer descendants who headed major divisions in Israel (see 46:8ff.; cf. Nu. 26:5ff.). Similarly, Esau's sons born in Canaan are listed (36:2-5), then again as re-located in Seir with their sons who were significant for national divisions (36:9-14), as is explained in the repetition of their names in the Edomite chieftain (Heb. *'allûp*, also interpreted as 'clan') list (36:15-19).

The formula (36:1), which divides Genesis from 2:4 onwards into ten parts, marks the subdivision beginning at 36:9, which relates the Edomite phase of Esau's history. The explanation of Esau's departure (36:7) perhaps implies that Esau's presence in Seir at the time of Jacob's returning from Paddan-aram (cf. 32:3) was only preparatory to a later move there by his entire clan. With the shift of focus from the

family of Esau to the nation of Edom, it was in order to consider the line of the Horite Seir (36:20-30), whom the Lord dispossessed before Esau (cf. Dt. 2:12, 22) and with whom Esau's descendants intermarried (cf. 36:2 and 24, 12 and 22). Remarkably, while the explicit promise of king and kingdom made to favoured Jacob (35:11; cf. 17:6; Nu. 24:7; Dt. 17:14ff.) was still unfulfilled, kingship emerged in Edom, the land of scarcely-blessed Esau (36:31). There is no need, therefore, to suggest that this reference to kings in Israel could have been made only after the establishment of the monarchy, and that this verse must be a much later insertion. Its reference is to the divine promise of kings, as indicated. The list of Edomite kings (36:32-39) indicates an elective, not dynastic, office, the importance of the chiefs appearing in the additional list arranged with special attention on geographical and administrative divisions (36:40-43). The inclusion of the transitional 37:1 within the Esau-Edom section (contrast 25:11) underscores the rejected and separated character of this Esau history.

37:2 - 50:26 THE GENERATIONS OF JACOB

This last genealogical division of Genesis covers the period of Jacob's patriarchal authority (37:2a), begun upon his return to Isaac in Canaan as a co-regency with his ageing father. Joseph is prominent in the narrative as he follows his special vocation as preserver of the covenant family, exercising authority over them by virtue of his eminence in Egypt. He represented a new type of leadership in Israel—one by special divine selection and charismatic endowment, Joseph's particular gift being wisdom. Nevertheless, he remained subordinate to Jacob within the covenant structure. In the broader history, this era was introductory to the great redemptive act of deliverance under Moses. Under divine compulsion Jacob led the covenant community out of the land of promise to sojourn in what would become a house of bondage. This development fulfilled God's ominous word to Abraham (15:13), but stood under the promise of restoration after 400 years (15:14, 16).

37:2 - 45:28 Jacob's kingdom-heirs

The spiritual transformation previously wrought in the elect individual, Jacob, is now multiplied. The whole family of Jacob is refashioned into an OT church-community of faith, united in filial and brotherly love under Israel, the servant of the Lord.

37:2-36 A house divided. **2** Early indications of Joseph's future pre-eminence made him the object of jealous hatred, especially, it seems, among the four sons of the handmaids, who ranked lowest (cf. 30:3-13; 33:2). Their sullen resentment led to slothful service, dutifully reported by the favourite. **3 Son of his old age**. Except for Benjamin, all the sons were born during Jacob's second term of service, but

Joseph was the son born to the beloved Rachel after her long barrenness. The brothers discerned in the special robe, whether ornamented, varicoloured, or long-sleeved, Jacob's intention to honour Joseph with the birthright forfeited by Reuben (cf. 35:22; 1 Ch. 5:1f.). **5-8** In Joseph's doubled dream they sensed a divine predestinating disclosure. Professional dream interpretation is attested in much Ancient Near Eastern literature, including reference works listing dream symbols and meanings. **9-11** The second dream extended Joseph's dominion beyond his brothers to the parental heads of the household. Jacob took offence, not knowing that Joseph's dominion over him would operate within the context of the family's enforced stay in Egypt, and would not involve a usurpation of his patriarchal authority.

12ff. The pastoral activity in the Shechem area without harassment from the outraged Canaanites (cf. 34:30) spoke of God's continuing providential protection. **18ff.** The murder in the hearts of the brothers could not plead righteous indignation as an excuse this time (cf. 34:31) but only conceal itself with a cruel lie (vv. 31f.). Reuben's countersuggestion (vv. 21f.) was accepted only because it seemed still to entail eventual death for Joseph in the deep cistern. The plea for mercy proved ineffectual (cf. 42:21) until baited with the lure of extra profit (vv. 26f.) beyond Joseph's double inheritance share, lust for which was the root of all this evil. Judah's plan unwittingly thwarted Reuben's (vv. 22, 29f.) but did save Joseph from death.

28 The members of the Ishmaelite (vv. 25, 27, 28b) caravan who bought Joseph are called *Midianites*; those who sold him in Egypt, *Medanites* (v. 36, Heb.). Midian and Medan were two 'sons of Abraham' by Keturah (cf. 25:2), but probably no distinction is intended in Gn. 37. The sellers are called Ishmaelites in 39:1. In Jdg. 8:24 also, certain 'Midianites' are identified as 'Ishmaelites'. The racial significance of 'Ishmaelite' possibly yields to a secondary meaning like 'traders'. This identity of Midian and Medan, and the use of Ishmaelite as a descriptive title covering both, removes the often-asserted need to divide this narrative between the putative sources in order to explain its alleged contradictions. Afar off, the approaching caravan was identified as that of 'traders' (v. 25), but when they passed by they were discovered to be Midianite. The return to the title 'traders' (v. 28b) serves to underline the callousness of the brothers' treatment of Joseph. In v. 28 the subject of *drew Joseph up* ... is Joseph's brothers (cf. 45:4f.). *Twenty shekels*; cf. Ex. 21:32; Lv. 27:5.

31-36 The rankling robe (cf. vv. 3f.) became legal evidence to confirm the transfer of Joseph's inheritance to his rivals (cf. Ex. 22:13 and above on 31:39). Jacob, deceiver in his youth, was cruelly deceived (v. 33), but the Lord he now feared was already so overruling (v. 36) that the very son whose death Jacob mourned (vv. 34f.)

would yet mourn his death with all Egypt's honour (cf. 50:1ff.).

38:1-30 Alien alliances. 1 From his brothers. Judah's separation further illustrates the disunity of Jacob's community (cf. ch. 37). This must have occurred soon after Joseph's sale, for within the time from then to Jacob's descent into Egypt, slightly more than two decades, Judah married, had sons, and they also married. Ch. 38 spans the period to 42:1. *Went down.* Judah descended from Hebron in the mountains to the Philistine hill country. The move was downward by covenant standards too, for its outcome was fraternizing with the Canaanite Hiram and marriage to the Canaanite Shua (v. 2). Cf. above on 24:3ff. **7 The Lord slew him.** In the sudden death of his firstborn, Judah was confronted with the rapid degeneration that had resulted from his intimate Canaanite alliances (cf. Gn. 19). **8 Offspring for your brother.** Such levirate marriage was practised widely (cf. Hittite and Middle Assyrian law codes) and was later regulated for Israel by Moses (Dt. 25:5ff.). The firstborn of the new marriage was reckoned as heir of the deceased brother, continuing his name. Onan coveted the firstborn's portion for his own name. **9, 10** In his despicable refusal to perform his fraternal obligation and in God's judgment Judah received a monitory reminder of the brothers' sin against Joseph. **11** Yet he too conspired against Tamar's right and Er's name.

12ff. Tamar was eventually undeceived and schemed to obtain satisfaction from Judah, now a widower. This had legal precedent, for in some areas the deceased's father could take the widow. **18 Signet;** a cylinder seal worn on a cord about the neck, a personal signature. *Staff;* these sometimes figured as symbols in concluding transactions. **21 Harlot.** This term *qēdēšā*, 'cult prostitute, votary', used in reference to Tamar, reflects the abysmal corruption of Canaanite culture to which the covenant family was exposed particularly by moves like Judah's. In the Canaanite fertility cult men and women were set apart for sexual immorality as for a holy function (as the root meaning of *qēdēšā* signifies). **24 Burned.** Though in sending Tamar back to her father's house (v. 11) Judah designed to be rid of her, he now asserted his patriarchal jurisdiction, seeing a way to be free of her and appear righteous at the same time. According to the later Mosaic legislation, burning, the severest penalty, was prescribed for certain extreme cases (cf. Lv. 20:14; 21:9), and stoning was the penalty for a case like Tamar's, as betrothed to Shelah (cf. Dt. 22:20ff.). **26 More righteous than I.** Both had practised deception, but she to secure her legal rights and he to circumvent his legal-paternal obligations. **29 Perez;** an ancestor of David's dynasty (cf. Ru. 4:18ff.; 1 Ch. 2:3-15; Mt. 1:3).

39:1 - 41:57 Preservation of the preserver. Going back some 20 years to the time of 37:36, the narrative at 39:1 turns to the providential developments in Joseph's career that were pre-

paring for Jacob's household a way out of the increasingly dangerous conditions depicted in chs. 37 and 38.

39:1 Potiphar; probably an abbreviated form of the Egyptian name Potiphara (cf. 41:45), 'he whom the sun-god has given'. *Captain of the guard;* or 'chief steward' (cf. on 39:21). Slave lists from this period attest to the presence of many Asiatics on Egyptian estates, most of them war-captives but many, like Joseph, obtained through commercial importation. *Pharaoh,* being unnamed, has been variously identified as belonging to the Middle Kingdom (XIIth Dynasty 1991-1786 bc), the XIIIth (Egyptian) Dynasty, or the Hyksos era (c. 1720-1550 bc), not to mention the radical later chronology. **2 The Lord was with Joseph** (and vv. 21, 23); cf. Ps. 105:17. **3 Cf. 30:27.** **4 Joseph's title as overseer of his house** reflects a common Egyptian title. Extra-biblical evidence for Semitic slaves in Egypt shows that some attained positions of domestic trust.

9 How . . . can I . . . sin against God? Joseph's persisting integrity exemplified the spiritual power of divine grace operative through the covenant. The world's influence might invade the chosen community (cf. Gn. 38) but a holy witness to God's name would also be carried from Israel into the nations. **12 His garment** (and vv. 15, 18). For the second time a coat of Joseph is made to lie about him (cf. 37:31ff.). **14 A Hebrew** (and v. 17); cf. above on 14:13. Gn. 39 - Ex. 10 forms one of three clusters in the OT where 'Hebrew' appears. Though a simple equation of Hebrews and Israelites sometimes seems in view (cf. Ex. 5:1-3), 'Hebrews' possibly denotes a broader group of Eberites in this section. Its derogatory flavour on Egyptian lips reflects Egyptian bias against Asiatics. **20 Into the prison;** cf. Ps. 105:18. Death was the expected penalty for the crime charged. **21-23** The divine favour that secured the milder penalty continued in the prison, bringing to Joseph the esteem of Potiphar's (cf. 40:3 and 39:1) assistant there.

40:2 Chief butler, better 'cupbearer', corresponds to the title of an Egyptian officer, a confidant and adviser of Pharaoh. *Chief baker,* as an attendant on Pharaoh, was another high official. **4 Charged Joseph with them.** Joseph's trust was over administrative affairs in the prison; superiority over the high-ranking prisoners was not implied (cf. 41:12). **5 Each dream with its own meaning.** Cf. above on 37:5ff. The dream data were derived from the dreamer's familiar function and concern but were so shaped by God as to be prophetic. **8 Interpretations belong to God.** Cf. 41:16, 25ff. The Egyptian officials were dismayed by their lack of access to their favourite dream interpreters but the Hebrew slave rejected such professionals as charlatans. **13 Lift up your head.** Joseph used a key expression capable of opposite meanings to describe first the cupbearer's pardon and restoration to honour (cf. 2 Ki. 25:27, RV; RSV, 'graciously freed'), then the decapitation of the baker (v. 19).

The narrator accents the device by using the phrase in a third sense, i.e. 'to give attention to (the pending cases)', in his account of the fulfilment (v. 20). **14** So confident was Joseph of his divine gift of interpretation that he requested a return of kindness from the cupbearer. **15 Stolen out of the land.** Basing his claim to pardon on his actual guiltlessness, Joseph correctly described his brothers' deed in stripping him of his rights, freedom, and inheritance for their own enrichment, as a theft. **19 Birds will eat the flesh.** The impaling and devouring of the corpse was an extreme aggravation of the penalty and disgrace (cf. Dt. 21:22), particularly for an Egyptian courtier, for whom mummification and a splendid sepulchre were of paramount concern.

41:1 Pharaoh dreamed. The providential series of dreams concludes: the middle pair (40:5ff.) proved the means for involving Joseph in the third pair (cf. 41:9ff.) and this last pair served to fulfil the first pair (37:5ff.). The doubling of the dreams signified the certainty of the divine purpose revealed (41:32). **2-7** For supplementary details see vv. 17-24. The repetition of long sections is part of the Ancient Near Eastern story-telling art. **8 All its wise men.** The accessibility of Pharaoh's experts only compounded his frustration (cf. on 40:8). **9 I remember my faults,** or 'remissness' (abstract plural); cf. 40:14, 23f. **14 Called Joseph.** The de-Semiteizing of Joseph's appearance began in deference to Egyptian custom and particularly court etiquette. Monument paintings of Egyptians depict clean-shaven faces and white linen dress. **16 It is not in me.** Joseph engaged in this virtual wisdom contest forthrightly in the name of his God (cf. vv. 25, 28, 32; Dn. 2:27-30).

29-32 Seven years of famine would follow seven bumper crop years leaving no trace of their reserves (v. 31). The seven-year famine is known not only as a motif in ancient epics but as a reality in Egyptian historical records. **33-41** Joseph's prompt proposing of provident measures (vv. 33ff.) so heightened the impression made on Pharaoh's court that they were persuaded of his supernatural insight (v. 38; cf. Dn. 5:11ff.) and acknowledged him the man for the position he proposed (vv. 39ff.; cf. Ps. 105:21f.). Since Joseph was set as chief steward over Pharaoh's 'house' (v. 4), in command over *all the land of Egypt* (v. 41), directly responsible and subordinate only to Pharaoh (v. 40), his office may well have been that of grand vizier. Other Asiatics are known to have achieved similar eminence in Egypt's government in the 2nd millennium bc. **42** Joseph's investiture, with robes of honour and wide golden collar, was traditionally Egyptian. **43 Second chariot;** or, chariot of the second-in-command. **45 Zaphenath-paneah** is still of uncertain meaning. *Asenath* is a type of name attested in the early second millennium. *On,* or Heliopolis, was cultic centre of Re, the sun-god. *Potiphara;* cf. on 39:1. Joseph's entrance into the court with his change of name (cf. Dn. 1:7) and marriage to a priest's daughter

completed his outward Egyptianization. His bold confession of the God of Israel would prevent his cultural adjustments being misunderstood as a religious capitulation.

46a Cf. 37:2. 50-52 Joseph's explanations of the names of *Manasseh* and *Ephraim* continued his witness to his God, with thanksgiving. He had forgotten the house of Jacob (v. 51) only in the sense that the hardship brought on him by his brothers was a thing of the past by virtue of the remarkable turn of providence. **53-57** The progressive fulfilment of Pharaoh's prophetic dreams set the stage for the final act in the fulfilment of Joseph's own dreams.

42:1 - 45:28 Remnant and reconciliation. 41:57 - 42:5 Cf. above on 12:10. For the chronology see 45:6. In the common emergency the whole family acted together under Jacob's authority. Benjamin now occupied the favourite's position, a circumstance on which Joseph's imminent testing of the ten would pivot.

42:6ff. Bowed themselves before him. Unaware they fulfilled the dreams they had gone to desperate lengths to defeat (cf. 37:5ff.; 42:9). Their failure to recognize Joseph is explained by his thorough Egyptianization, the incredible circumstances of the encounter, and Joseph's studious concealment of his identity. Evidently foreign grain distributions fell under Joseph's immediate supervision. Subsequent re-telling of the conversation of vv. 7ff. (see 43:7 and 44:19f.) indicates that Joseph elicited the family history (vv. 11ff.) by further questioning not recorded here. **15 You shall be tested.** The real question was, of course, not whether they were spies, but whether they had had a change of heart. **17-20 He put them . . . in prison,** then, showing leniency, released them in the name of his fear of God (cf. 20:11) to stir their consciences with the memory of how they enslaved without pity that brother they described as 'no more' (v. 13). Cf. vv. 21f. **21-26 He took Simeon** (v. 24), the second oldest, as hostage after discovering the innocence of Reuben, the oldest (vv. 22f). The subtle correspondence between the treatment each brother received and his responsibility in the selling of Joseph (cf. too 43:33) intensified their guilty sense of a divine vengeance stalking them (v. 21). Perhaps too they wondered whether this uncanny Egyptian practised arts of divination (cf. 44:5, 15). Joseph put them in that old situation again of appearing before Jacob without one brother (cf. vv. 33f., 36).

27 As one of them opened his sack. According to this and v. 35, only one of them chanced to open his sack with the money at the lodging-place, the others discovering theirs at home. The abbreviated version of the homeward trip as reported to the steward in 43:21 telescopes the initial and later discoveries of the money bundles. Actually the whole picture is simplified, for to meet the needs of Jacob's clan and justify the trip by ten men, more than ten sacks of grain must have been brought back. **28 What is this that God has done?** Joseph's

strategy was working. Already under suspicion, they felt they could never clear themselves of the inevitable charge of theft. 29-36 It appears that they withheld this crushing fact from Jacob until the multiple discovery in his presence let the cat out of the bag (v. 35). 37 Reuben as eldest assumed responsibility, displaying again admirable qualities (cf. 37:21ff.; 42:22). 38 But Jacob, perhaps remembering Reuben's earlier offence (cf. 35:22), refused his offer of surety. Such was Jacob's partiality towards Benjamin that he repressed concern to deliver Simeon rather than part with Benjamin under ominous circumstances.

43:1-8 But the preservation of the lives of all in the midst of continuing famine demanded the perilous trip—with Benjamin. 9, 10 *I will be surety for him.* It was Judah who prevailed with Jacob, assuming full responsibility for Benjamin's safety under pain of the loss of Jacob's blessing and thus of disinheritance. By the transforming grace that produced the Jacob-Israel change a new spirit of solidarity and self-sacrifice had arisen in the house divided. 11-15 Sadly resigned (cf. v. 14b) to the second journey, Jacob made practical, propitiatory arrangements (cf. 32:13ff.), committing the matter to God, almighty in His providential government (v. 14).

16-34 Observing Benjamin's presence, Joseph put his now long-meditated plan into operation (16ff.) 23 *The God of your fathers.* The steward had been taken into Joseph's confidence and perhaps even accepted the faith of Joseph. His explanation explained far more than the brothers' immediate puzzle (vv. 21f.) and at a more profound level than they were thinking; but they were too nervously distracted to hear his broad hint. Indeed, they were so wary of the steward's unpredictable master that his very hospitality alarmed them (v. 18). At the dinner they failed to leap to the one logical explanation of his behaviour, with his concern for Jacob (v. 27), affectionate favouritism for Benjamin (vv. 29f., 34), and exact knowledge of the interlocking sequence of births of these sons of four mothers (v. 33). The Egyptians' eating scruples (v. 32) derived from ideas of ritual purity. The brothers' lack of resentment towards the highly preferred Benjamin (v. 34) suggested a heart-conversion but Joseph had a more positive, ultimate test prepared (44:1ff.).

44:1 *Each man's money.* The purpose of this feature, not subsequently mentioned again, was probably to enflame the brothers' smouldering sense that God was mysteriously dealing with them for their great sin, summoning to repentance (cf. 42:28; 43:23). It would also lend plausibility to a punishment based on communal responsibility, so making Joseph's insistence on isolating Benjamin for punishment more arresting. 2 *The silver cup* served to separate Benjamin as peculiarly guilty, while the sacred character attributed to it (cf. vv. 5, 15) made its theft a crime worthy of death (cf. 31:32). 4 *A short distance.* Apprehension of a thief in the

act, or virtually so (as when his hot scent was followed and the loot discovered in his possession), resulted legally in peremptory and extreme punishment (cf. 31:22ff.; Jdg. 18:22ff.). The search of the overtaken suspect was regarded as a veritable ordeal, its outcome incontestable (cf. 31:36ff.). 5 *By this that he divines.* Divination by water was a widespread ancient practice, Joseph's alleged divining by the cup was certainly part of the contrived situation he fabricated with his steward's assistance. 9 The penalty the brothers pronounced before the search was that customary for the alleged crime (cf. vv. 2 and 4). 11-13 The search ordeal with its exposure of the money bundles (cf. on v. 1), the astounding correspondence of its sequence to the brothers' ages (cf. 43:33), and the shattering exposure of Benjamin, had the desired effect. 14-17 However innocent they may have known themselves to be in the present inexplicable instance, they were convinced that God was judging their ancient guilt (v. 16; cf. 42:21f.). Joseph's theatrical claim (v. 15) increased their alertness to the supernatural and prompted the confession voiced by Judah as group spokesman (cf. vv. 14, 16; 43:33ff.). Then Joseph increased the pressure by insisting that the ten return to Jacob—without Benjamin—in peace (v. 17)!

33 *Let your servant remain instead of the lad.* More than this Joseph could not hope for. God had so changed his brothers' hearts that Judah's plea and self-offer carries away our thoughts involuntarily to the Servant born of his tribe who offered Himself for the transgression of His people.

45:3, 4 Stunned silence followed the Egyptian's *I am Joseph* and in spite of all assurances (vv. 4ff.) a persistent uneasiness remained for many years (cf. 50:15). 5 *God sent me.* Though stressing the sovereign providence in absolute terms (cf. 'not you . . . but God', v. 8a), Joseph's intent was not to deny his brothers' guilty responsibility (his whole strategy had aimed at stirring their consciences). But now that a godly sorrow gripped them, Joseph would turn them from remorseful backward looks to thankful appropriation of the future God's mercy had provided (vv. 8b ff.). 6 *Neither ploughing nor harvest;* the two words express a compound idea, 'no yield from tilling'. 7 *A remnant.* God had been preserving a remnant people to bear His revelation from the Fall in Eden through the desolation of the Flood, and out of the idolatry that overwhelmed the nations, Joseph properly traced that Messianic strand in Israel's history in his own day. 8 *Father to Pharaoh* is the equivalent of a title held by Egyptian viziers. 10 *Goshen* was an Egyptian region (cf. 47:6, 27) in the E Delta area (cf. 47:11) and thus not far from the court at Memphis (whether in XIIth or XIIIth Dynasty, or in the Hyksos era). Yet as a place highly suitable for the cattle (47:4-6) disdained by Egyptians (cf. 46:34) it afforded relative seclusion. 11 It thus had advantages for the

immediate emergency, since Joseph could conveniently provide for Israel there, and for the long-term sojourn that would ensue, for the isolation would make possible the preservation of Israel's distinctive covenant-culture under conditions favourable to their unity and growth. 17, 18 Pharaoh changed the form of Joseph's orders to Israel's household (cf. vv. 9ff.) into a personal invitation from himself. Joseph's specific intention of locating the family in Goshen he had kept private with his brothers, adroitly securing Pharaoh's consent to that only when the time came (cf. 46:31ff.). 19 *Wagons;* probably large two-wheeled carts such as are pictured in Egyptian scenes. 22 *Five* (or 'several') *festal garments.* Joseph no longer need have qualms about sending off Benjamin in his own old position among the sons of Jacob—not even with a favourite's robe! 24 His concern was only with the possibility of recriminations among the ten as they returned to Jacob and the dreaded necessity of confessing to him their great sin. 26, 27 Easily persuaded of Joseph's death, Jacob was a doubter concerning his 'resurrection', only persuaded by the evidence of his senses. 28 *I will go.* So spoke the man Israel, and Israel the nation was destined to emerge in a land not theirs, their return to Canaan requiring God's mighty acts in Exodus and conquest that stamped on Israel's possession of the kingdom the character of a sovereign grant from a divine Saviour.

46:1 - 47:27 Israel's descent into Egypt

46:1-27 Pilgrim house of Israel. Jacob discerned through the remarkable course of events, divinely disclosed beforehand in Joseph's dreams and afterwards prophetically interpreted by him (cf. 45:5ff.), that God had sent a marrahead and now purposed for Israel's household to go down to Egypt (cf. Ps. 105:17, 23). Cf. above on 24:8. 1a Consideration of God's warning to Abraham of a sojourn in a foreign land (15:13ff.) would make the departure from Canaan a challenge to the depths of Jacob's faith in the covenant's future. 1b He responded with renewal of commitment at Beer-sheba, patriarchal altar site on the borders of the land (cf. 21:33; 26:23-25). 2-4 Here also Jacob received the last in the series of special revelations that marked his pilgrim life, much like the first in its circumstances and reassurances (cf. 28:12-15). The Lord dispelled any lingering uncertainty concerning Jacob's duty (v. 3b); in Egypt itself the promises would begin to be fulfilled (v. 3c; cf. 12:2; Ps. 105:24). *Bring you up again.* As the last clause in v. 4 indicates, Jacob would have the joy of reunion with Joseph but would die in Egypt (cf. 45:28; 46:30). God's promise of restoration was meant, therefore, for Israel become a nation (cf. v. 3c; 15:14, 16).

8ff. *These are the names of the descendants of Israel, who came into Egypt.* Like the section on the generations of Esau (cf. 36:1ff.), that on the generations of Jacob (37:2ff.) distinguishes

two geographical phases—in Canaan and removed from Canaan, the latter marked here by a new genealogical list supplementing that of 35:23ff. (cf. 36:9ff.). The epochal import of the emigration to Egypt for the history of Israel and the promises (cf. Dt. 10:22) called for a formal catalogue at this point. Stylistically the conventions of such lists are followed (cf. above on Gn. 5), particularly selectivity to achieve conventional totals, in this case seventy (v. 27; cf. Gn. 10; Ex. 1:5; 24: 9). As comparison with the later list in Nu. 26 shows, the selection was designed primarily to include besides the tribal heads the founders of the fathers' houses in Israel, the major tribal sub-divisions. *Jacob and his sons* (v. 8). This shows that Jacob is included in the seventy, as does the notation in vv. 26f., apparently meaning that without Jacob, Joseph, and his two sons the total is sixty-six. Hence Jacob is to be counted among the thirty-three in the Leah category (v. 15). So also is Dinah (cf. *daughters*, v. 15), Er and Onan being omitted (v. 12). Category descriptions in such lists refer to the general situation rather than dwell on the particular circumstances of each individual. Cf. 35:26b, where Benjamin is an exception. Note also here v. 18, where the 'sons' of Zilpah include Serah (v. 17). Similarly, the whole company is described as coming into Egypt (vv. 8, 26)—not necessarily with Jacob, hence Joseph is no problem—but chronological limitations prove that some of the descendants (besides Ephraim and Manasseh) were born in Egypt. Judah's son Perez (cf. 38:29) surely did not have the sons Hezron and Hamul (v. 12) before the departure; neither did Benjamin, not yet twenty-five, already have ten descendants including grandsons (v. 21; cf. Nu. 26:38ff.). Further, on Reuben's four sons (v. 9)—cf. 42:37. Stephen (see Acts 7:14) follows a literary tradition (cf. LXX) which includes five additional descendants. The actual size of the clan with the wives and daughters, servants and their households (cf. 30:34) would be several or even many times seventy.

46:28 - 47:27 Israel, blessed and blessing. As Pharaoh opened the door of blessing to Israel (47:6), blessing was returned upon his house through the pronouncement of Jacob (47:7, 10) and Joseph's continuing wise administration (47:13ff.). Cf. 12:3. Later, a reversal of Egyptian policy towards Israel would bring God's judgments upon them.

46:28 *Sent Judah before him.* Judah's role as trusted negotiator had been established (cf. 43:3ff.; 44:18ff.). His mission was to arrange details of the rendezvous in Goshen. 29 *He presented himself,* lit. 'showed himself'. For this appearance of Jacob's son from the dead in the glory of Egypt, an expression is used hitherto reserved in the narrative for theophany (cf. 37:9f.). 31-34 Joseph's programme for Jacob's household was calculated to protect them from Egypt's pagan influences. But he skilfully effected this without offence to the Egyptians

by arranging for Pharaoh to act to separate the Israelites out of regard for Egyptian prejudice (v. 34b). 47:1, 2 In both Joseph's preparatory audience with Pharaoh (v. 1; cf. 46:31f.) and that of his brothers (v. 2; cf. 46:33f.), their occupation as shepherds and their present location in the pastures of Goshen were so stressed as virtually to put the desired decision in Pharaoh's mouth (cf. vv. 5f., 11f.). 6 Pharaoh's favour extended to the appointment of capable Israelites to officialdom.

9 *The years of my sojourning.* Jacob's assessment of his life is not a complaint (cf. 48:16a) but a soberly accurate account. In common with Abraham and Isaac he was a stranger in Canaan, his life orientated to a future city of God (cf. Heb. 11:13ff.); but his alien residency in Canaan was even more troubled and his life-span (as he correctly anticipated, cf. v. 28) briefer than theirs (v. 9b). Moreover, he must die as a sojourner outside the promised land. 11 *Land of Rameses;* Goshen is thus given, by anticipation, its later name. 13 *The land of Canaan.* Joseph's wisdom brought blessing to the promised land, while contributing to the Egyptian overlordship there. 14ff. The economic measures instituted by Joseph were viewed by the Egyptians themselves as a favour, indeed, as their salvation (cf. v. 25) in the desperate famine emergency (vv. 13, 20). 18 *The following* (lit. 'second') year. The last of the seven famine years predicted had apparently passed, for Joseph now contemplates sowing and taxable harvests (cf. vv. 23ff.). 20 *The land became Pharaoh's* in fact, as it had been previously in theory. Egyptian evidence shows that the situation described here, including the priestly exemptions recorded in vv. 22, 26, existed by the New-Empire period. 21 'Removed them to cities' (AV), i.e. for more efficient distribution—but why at this late stage? Perhaps translate, 'from the cities', i.e. where they had come to be near the granaries and in order now to sow their fields again (cf. v. 23). RSV's *made slaves of them* follows LXX tradition and suits the context before (v. 20) and after (vv. 23, 25). 27 *Multiplied exceedingly;* cf. above on 46:3.

47:28 - 50:26 Israel's hope of restoration

Dying in faith (cf. Heb. 11:13ff.), Jacob prophetically made testamentary disposition first concerning Joseph's family (ch. 48; cf. Heb. 11:21), then concerning all his sons (ch. 49). Further, he charged Joseph in his capacity as Egyptian lord (47:29ff.) and all the brothers as obedient sons of the covenant (49:29ff.) to bury him in the promised land. And Joseph, dying in faith, spoke of the Exodus of the Israelites (50:24ff.; cf. Heb. 11:22).

47:28 - 48:22 *Joseph's commission and double inheritance.* 47:29 *The time drew near;* cf. on 27:2. On the gesture accompanying the oath (vv. 29, 31a), cf. on 24:2. 30 'I will lie with my fathers' (AV). This should not be equated with burial (so

RSV) but understood as an aspect of Jacob's dying, which was to be followed by the transporting of his body into Canaan and finally burial there. Jacob's insistence on burial at Machpelah expressed his attachment by faith to the Abrahamic covenant and his trust in God's promises of the kingdom to be established in Canaan (cf. on Gn. 23). 31 Appropriately, therefore, he worshipped (v. 31b). The 'staff' (LXX, for Heb. *matteh*, instead of *bed, mittā*) would be an identifying link with Canaan (cf. 32:10). For the legal testamentary character of the patriarchs' dying blessings (chs. 48 and 49), cf. on 27:33.

48:1 The relationship of 47:29ff. to 48:1ff. is uncertain. *After this* need not refer to the immediately preceding charge. In fact, Heb. 11:21b appends 47:31b to the ch. 48 episode (unless Heb. 11:21 refers to 48:12b). Joseph's two sons were about twenty years old. 3, 4 Jacob recognized the source of the blessings he was about to communicate in God and traced their content to the revelation at Bethel (cf. 28:13ff.; 35:10ff.). 5 *Shall be mine.* This was a declaration of intent to adopt the two grandsons, thus elevating them both to the status of tribal heads and thereby giving Joseph, according to his dreams (37:5ff.), the position of firstborn with a double representation among the tribes of Israel (1 Ch. 5:1f.; cf. Dt. 21:15ff.). 6 Joseph's additional sons would be subsumed under the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. 7 The allusion to Rachel and her burial was prompted by the honouring of her son Joseph. Her sepulchre would be apart from Jacob's in ancestral Machpelah (cf. 47:30; 49:29ff.) but her name would be honourably remembered in Joseph's double inheritance.

8ff. The actual adoption is connected with the testamentary blessing of the two grandsons. 12 *From his* (i.e. Jacob's) *knees;* perhaps the legal rite formalizing adoption is implied. 14 *Crossing his hands.* Repeatedly the last became first (both Jacob and Joseph were examples), attesting that the covenant blessings are not secured by the course of nature but as sovereign gifts of God. 15, 16 *He blessed Joseph;* the sons who were being blessed now stood in Joseph's place among the tribal fathers. *The angel who has redeemed me.* Jacob knew the covenant as a living reality (v. 15) in which the Lord approached him in the sacramental visibility of the angel, assuming the role of nearest kinsman (as the verb 'redeemed' implies) to deliver Jacob from every threat to his life and liberty (see on 16:7). *Bless the lads.* Jacob blessed in that he effectively invoked God's blessing. 19, 20 *Younger brother shall be greater.* Both Ephraim and Manasseh entered tribally into the inheritance which God gave to His people (v. 16b), yet Ephraim attained greater prominence in Israel's history. 21 Jacob's hope of restoration would not be realized in Joseph's lifetime, and hence the prophecy would be repeated when Joseph was dying (cf. 50:24). 22 *Mountain slope.* Jacob punned on *sēkem*, 'shoulder', the name of

the city of Shechem. For near it they had a possession (cf. 33:19f.) which was a pledge of the future conquest of Canaan here prophesied. *I took;* the tense is prophetic perfect, i.e. the past tense is used, as often in Hebrew, to express the certainty with which a future event would happen. Jacob and Joseph here represent their descendants. Joseph was buried at Shechem (Jos. 24:32; cf. Jn. 4:5). 'One . . . above thy brethren' (RV); as privilege of the firstborn. Cf. Jos. 17:14ff.

49:1-33 *Jacob's prophetic testament.* Cf. Dt. 33:1ff. These death-bed (v. 33) blessings (v. 28) of the original twelve were testamentary and prophetic. 1 'In the latter days' (RV). This testamentary vision looked beyond the Mosaic Exodus and restoration to the Messianic (see on vv. 10ff.). At the same time the general tribal characterizations here given received historical embodiment during the OT phase of God's kingdom. Leah's six sons are treated first (vv. 3-15), then the four sons of the handmaids (vv. 16-21), and Rachel's two last (vv. 22-27). The pre-eminence of the Judah and Joseph tribes in Israelite history is prophetically matched here by the prominence of their blessings. Reuben, Simeon, and Levi are included as tribes belonging to the future covenant nation and to that extent are blessed. Yet it is the shadow cast by their crimes over their blessing that receives all the notice (vv. 3-7), thereby providing a dark foil against which Judah's glory bursts forth (vv. 8ff.). 3, 4 Cf. 35:22; 37:3; 48:5; 1 Ch. 5:1f. 5, 6 Cf. 34:25ff. 7 *I will divide them;* this was a destiny opposite to the sentiment of Levi's name (cf. 29:34). Levi's cities were distributed among other tribes. For the later change of this curse into blessing see Dt. 33:8ff. 8, 9 *Shall praise you;* Hebrew *yōdūka*, a pun on *y'hūda*, Judah. *Bow down before you.* The charismatic leadership over Israel assigned to Joseph in his generation would take royal form (cf. v. 10) in Judah, in the dynasty of David, who by his military prowess and political sagacity triumphed over Israel's enemies on every side (vv. 8b, 9).

10 *The sceptre shall not depart.* The royal dignity of Judah attained in David was made permanent by the Davidic covenant (cf. 2 Sa. 7:16), fully realized in the Kingship of Jesus Christ. 'Until Shiloh come' (AV). The Hebrew text here contains the word *šylh*. The versions, however, apparently reflect a reading *šlh*. If we follow the lead given by the versions, we read the word as *šēlōh*, equivalent in Hebrew to *'āšer lō*, meaning 'that (which) to him'. One possibility then is to understand it to mean 'that which belongs to him (i.e. Judah)': Judah will continue to be the royal house until all that is rightfully his comes to him; or again (as RSV) 'he to whom it (i.e. the sceptre or kingship) belongs'. Ezekiel evidently treats the passage in this latter way (Ezk. 21:27; in the Hebrew Bible 21:32; cf. Ezk. 19), apparently in a Messianic sense; his treatment of *š(y)lh* could involve free

punning. If the MT *šlōh* is followed (as in AV), then the traditional understanding of it as a Messianic title meaning something like 'the establisher of peace' (cf. 1 Ch. 22:9), will deserve the preference over the interpretation of Shiloh as the Ephraimite city (e.g. 1 Sa. 1:3). In Christ, Lion of the tribe of Judah (Rev. 5:5; cf. Gn. 49:9) and Prince of peace (Is. 9:6), the turning-point was reached in the Davidic dynasty, not terminating it but introducing its final and complete expression. To Christ is the *obedience of the peoples*, i.e. of the nations universally (cf., e.g., Ps. 72:8-11; Is. 11:10), and only His reign produces the peace of ultimate and eternal paradise (vv. 11f.; cf., e.g., Ps. 72:15f.; Is. 11:6ff.). If the Hebrew consonantal text *šylh* is differently divided, one possibility is *šay lōh*, 'tribute-payment to him', the last two clauses of v. 10 then being parallel. Again it would be to Judah's Messianic Descendant that this international acknowledgment comes.

13 *At the shore* (Heb. *l'hōp*). Is this another instance of the preposition's meaning 'from' ('apart from the shore'), for Zebulun's later tribal allocation was not maritime? 16 *Dan shall judge* (*yādin*). Many of Jacob's blessings involve such Hebrew word-plays. 18 *I wait for thy salvation, O Lord.* This irrepressible 'Come quickly' may have been inspired by Jacob's apprehension of the trials to be faced or by his longing for the kingdom to be inherited. 22ff. Upon Joseph, separated to pre-eminence among his brethren (v. 26), Jacob pronounced blessings in peace (vv. 22, 25b) and war (vv. 23f.), tracing them all to God, whom he identified repeatedly as his own (cf. 'of Jacob', 'of Israel', 'of your father', vv. 24f.). MT in v. 26 reads: 'have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors (*hōray*) unto (*'ad*) the utmost bound (*ta'awāt*) of the everlasting hills' (AV). RSV prefers *har'rē 'ad, eternal mountains, and bounties for ta'awāt*; cf. Dt. 33:15; Hab. 3:6. 29 *He charged them.* The twelve as a group of equals were entrusted with the mission of faith already assigned to Joseph (cf. 47:29ff.). 33 *Was gathered to his people;* cf. 47:30.

50:1-26 *Covenant guardianship.* The era of the patriarchs was over and the covenant community and witness came under the guardianship of Joseph as the prototype of a new, charismatic leadership in Israel, one that would resume with Moses and culminate in Christ. 2 *Embalmed Israel.* The associated religious beliefs, particularly the Egyptian idea of immortality, were not adopted with the Egyptian art of mummification. It was rather utilized in the interests of Jacob's postponed burial in Canaan, itself a testimony to Israel's own distinctive hope. 4ff. Diplomatic considerations, or possibly disqualification from appearance in the royal court by reason of his mourning, explain Joseph's indirect approach to Pharaoh. 5 *I hewed out;* Jacob had prepared a place for his burial in the cave Abraham purchased (cf.

49:30; 50:13). 7-9 The exodus of Jacob according to Joseph's request amid the honour of Egypt was a pledge of Israel's later departure with Egypt's treasures, following Moses' negotiations with Pharaoh. 10 Similarly the entrance of Jacob into Canaan from across the Jordan in vv. 10ff. witnessed to and found its counterpart in Israel's conquest of the land under Joshua. 11 *Abel-mizraim*, 'meadow (or water-course) of the Egyptians' puns on 'ēbel, 'mourning'. Possibly the Egyptian escort remained here while Jacob's sons completed the mission that registered before the eyes of the Canaanites Israel's continuing claims in their land. 18 *Fell down before him*. Again Joseph's dreams were

strikingly fulfilled and the reconciliation of Israel's house confirmed (v. 21). 19, 20 *Cf.* above on 45:5ff. 22 *A hundred and ten years* (and v. 26) was esteemed by Egyptians the ideal life-span. 24, 25 *His brothers*; Joseph's kinsmen in general may be meant. *God will visit you*. Joseph emulated Jacob's dying faith, confessing the covenant God and hope by prophetic word (v. 24; cf. 48:21; ch. 49) and commission (v. 25; cf. 47:29ff.; 49:29ff.). 26 On v. 26b, cf. on v. 2 and see Ex. 13:19; Jos. 24:32. *So Joseph died*, but Israel in Egypt continued under the covenant guardianship of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob unto the day of redemption.

MEREDITH G. KLINE

Exodus

INTRODUCTION

TITLE AND AUTHORSHIP

The Greek translation of the OT (the LXX) bestowed the title Exodus (Gk. *exodos*, 'a going out') on this book; in the Hebrew Bible it is named after its opening words, viz. 'and these are the names'. Moses has been denoted as its author by Hebrew tradition (Ecclus. 45:5), by the Lord Jesus Christ (Mk. 1:44) and by His disciples (Jn. 1:45). Besides this we have the testimony of the book itself in 17:14, and this is nowhere explicitly contradicted. For further examination of the subject, see the article on 'Moses and the Pentateuch' (p. 41), which gives the position adopted here.

THEME AND PURPOSE

The key verses to the understanding of the book are 19:3-6, and from them two main subjects arise: the judgment of the oppressors and the deliverance of the oppressed (19:4), and the constitution of the delivered as the people of God and their characteristics (19:5). The main body of the book deals with these two themes and is divisible on this basis: e.g. 1:8-19:2 deals with judgment and deliverance, and 19:7-40:38 deals with the new society thus brought into being. In addition, there are two link sections which, together with the above, serve to give consistency and harmony to the book. These are 1:1-7 which shows how the Israelites came to be in Egypt and which paves the way for 1:8-19:2, and 19:3-6 which shows how they came to be at Sinai and prepares the reader for 19:7-40:38.

The main events recorded in this book are related to these two locations, Egypt and Sinai, and they are the two foci of the book, the latter being viewed as the goal of the former. The intervening wandering in the wilderness is viewed as the consequence of the deliverance and the necessary prelude to the constitution of the Israelites as the people of God. The emerging outline is simple and clear. 1:1-19:2—how the Israelites came to be in Egypt and how they came from there to Sinai; 19:3-40:38—how they consequently became, and were to manifest themselves as, a distinct nation.

The title given to the book by the Greek version, as we noted above, embodies its central and inescapable theme, that of God's deliverance of slaves in bondage that they might become a people for His own possession, service and glory. This is the central act recorded in the book, but attention is given also to certain of

the resultant privileges and responsibilities; this theme is concluded in Leviticus. All this foreshadows a greater exodus (deliverance) to come through the Lord Jesus Christ's death, and the emergence of those who were 'no people' as the people of God. The covenant He sealed by His blood creates the church; this the OT adumbrates and in it the OT believers participate.

THE DATE AND ROUTE OF THE EXODUS

The most helpful treatment of this subject is to be found in K. A. Kitchen's book *Ancient Orient and Old Testament*, 1966, pp. 57-75. Reference may also be made to the relevant section in the article 'Chronology of the Old Testament' in *NBD*.

Although there is no attestation of Israel's presence in Egypt in Egyptian records, there is no ground for denying or querying the biblical statement that twelve sons of Jacob went to Egypt (Ex. 1:1-5) and that their descendants came up from there (Ex. 24:4).

There is considerable debate, however, as to the date of the Exodus, and two main schemes of dating are advanced for the Exodus-conquest period. Neither is without some supporting internal evidence, but as yet neither is wholly free from objection. We shall list the more important data below and then tender a view for the purpose of this commentary, but the reader is referred also to the above-mentioned works, and in addition to the following: C. de Wit, *The Date and Route of the Exodus*, 1960, and M. F. Unger, *Archaeology and the Old Testament*, 1965. There are two suggested dates for the Exodus. The first is c. 1440 BC and the second c. 1290 BC.

Exodus c. 1440 BC (according to Prof. M. F. Unger)

1. 1 Ki. 6:1. The fourth year of Solomon's reign would be c. 961 BC and therefore the Exodus would be c. 1441 BC and the entry to Egypt c. 1870 BC, in accord with Ex. 12:40, 41. If this scheme is not accepted, then the Exodus-monarchy period has to be telescoped as a consequence. 2. Thutmose III (1482-1450 BC) was a conqueror and renowned builder and is suited as the pharaoh of the oppression, and Amenhotep II as the pharaoh of the Exodus. 3. Events in Palestine, as they are reconstructed from archaeological finds, e.g. the mention of the invading Habiru in the Amarna letters and the fall of Jericho, confirm that the entry took place c. 1400 BC.