

Janusz Lemański

University of Szczecin
ORCID: 0000-0002-1512-997X

Abraham versus Jacob¹

Abstract: The article deals with the formation process of the traditions concerning the three patriarchs from the book of Genesis. It can already be stated that the traditions of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were initially formed independently of one other. The chronological priority should be assigned to the tradition of Jacob. It was originally combined with the tradition of Isaac (in Amos), and before the exile it constituted the earliest point of reference for the search of roots and identity. It was only towards the end of the exile that the particular time and situation resulted in the local, Judaeen traditions of Abraham starting to play a greater role also in the theological aspect. Abraham became then not only a model of faith, and an example of behaviour for the exiles and the repatriates, but also the first link in the chain of the three patriarchs. Some motifs in the story of Abraham may have been at that time borrowed from the traditions of Isaac (cf. Gen 26).

Keywords: Abraham, Jacob, patriarchs of Israel, Exodus, Book of Genesis

Already at first glance, one can easily notice that the narrative of the patriarchs we know from the Genesis was constructed of traditions which had originally been distinct of one another. The origins of the Abrahamic tradition can easily be traced to Hebron and its direct vicinity, while the tradition of Jacob-Israel – to Transjordan and Shechem. However, it is the latter that has a marked

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chronological priority.² Between both these patriarchal figures, undoubtedly representing two initially independent tribal organisms, one from the south (Judah), and one from the north (the Israel tribes on both banks of the Jordan),³ there remains the figure of Isaac. In such a company he seems to be no more than the proverbial “poor relation.” In both the great cycles devoted to Abraham, and Jacob, he tends to be a second-rate character. In the only “independent” passage about him, in Gen 26, his story is narrated as if imitating in a shortened form the pattern of the narrative of Abraham. Because of the mysterious mentions of him in the Book of Amos (Amos 7:9.16), and his associations (“the house of Isaac”) with northern tribes (“the house of Israel”), and pilgrimages to Beer-sheba undertaken by the Israelites (Amos 5:5; 8:14; cf. Gen 26:23–25), it may be assumed that when the traditions of Abraham and Jacob merged, there had already been some traditional bonds connecting the ancestors of Israel with the inhabitants of Beer-sheba, and therefore only secondarily the tradition of that place, as well as that of its main hero, Isaac, could serve as the material for creating connections between the primogenitors of Judah and Israel. The question whether the events—or at least some part of them—associated today mainly with Abraham were ultimately lifted from the inherited traditions of Isaac can only be a subject to speculation.⁴ The core of the patriarchal traditions we know today in their canonical form comprises the stories of Abraham and Jacob, whereas Isaac is the figure allowing for the mediation between both ancestors of the Israel to be.

² For more on that: J. Lemański, *Księga Rodzaju rozdziały 11,27 – 36,43*, NKB.ST I/2, (Częstochowa: Św. Paweł 2014), 63–85, 592–600. On the Abrahamic tradition, cf. also A. Mühling, “*Blick auf Abraham, euren Vater*”. *Abraham als Identifikationsfigur des Judentums in der Zeit des Exils und den zweiten Tempels*, FRLANT 236, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2011).

³ It is worth noting that Judah is not mentioned in Judg 5 among the tribes of Israel called for by Deborah; J. Lemański, *Księga Rodzaju*, 771–4.

⁴ For a more in-depth treatment, cf. idem, “W poszukiwaniu tradycji o Izaaku,” *Colloquia Theologica Ottoniana* 2 (2013): 63–76; T. Römer, “Isaac (patriarch) I. Hebrew Bible/Old Testament,” in C.M. Furey et al., eds., *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception*, vol. 13 (Berlin, Boston: de Gruyter 2016), 260–6.

Tradition of the Three Patriarchs

The first thing we can ascertain is the fact that apart from minor exceptions there is no other Abrahamic tradition, besides the familiar narrative about him in Gen 11:27–25:10. After the patriarch's death (Gen 25:7–10), he is not mentioned in any meaningful way from the Book of Joshua all the way to the Second Book of Kings. The only element, somewhat frequently recurrent, is the traditional formula of the three patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob-Israel). We come across this standard phrase predominantly in the Book of Deuteronomy, less often in the Books of Exodus, and Numbers, and even less in the subsequent books of the so-called Deuteronomistic history. There is a consensus among exegetes that the formula marks the final stage of coalescing of the patriarchal traditions. In that sense, Isaac calls to the God of Abraham (Gen 26:23–24), and imitates throughout his life the episodes which establish a parallel to the events in the life of Abraham,⁵ while later Jacob encounters the God of Abraham, and Isaac (Gen 28:13; 32:10), and blesses his offspring in the name of the God, before whom his ancestors, Abraham, and Isaac, walked (Gen 48:15–16). Lastly, Joseph assures his brothers that one day the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will lead them from Egypt to the Promised Land (Gen 50:24).⁶

Looking at these utterances from historical-critical point of view, one could assume that behind the classic tripartite patriarchal formula: “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,” and its Yahwist identification (Exod 3:6.15–16; 4:5) there is a development path of the religion of ancient Israel. Albrecht Alt in his now famous essay “The God of the Fathers,”⁷ invoking the example of nomadic tribes, suggested that at an early stage each clan/tribe of the ancestors of Israel worshipped their own God. For

⁵ In relation to the tradition of Abraham, one may indicate, for instance, the journey to another country because of famine (Gen 26:1; cf. 12:10), and the tradition of the access to the well (Gen 26:15; cf. 21:25–32).

⁶ J. Blenkinsopp, *Abraham. The Story of a Life*, (Grand Rapids-Cambridge: Eerdmans 2015), 2.

⁷ A. Alt, *Der Gott der Väter*, in idem, *Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israel I*, (München: C.H. Beck 1959), 1–78.

that reason, Laban and Jacob – relatives of blood, when concluding a border agreement, referred each to his own God as the guarantors of the agreement's performance. Thus, Laban called on the God of Nahor, meanwhile Jacob – the God of Abraham, also referred to as “the fear of Isaac” (Gen 31:53).⁸ The context clearly suggests a polytheistic meaning of the reference.⁹

In the context of the historical books mentioned, attention is due to a single unorthodox evocation of this patriarch in Josh 24. The passage presents a short synthesis of the history of the chosen people (Josh 24:2–13), which was to culminate in the covenant of Shechem (Josh 24:1–28). However, it does not open with a reference to Jacob, or to the triad of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but instead to Terah, Abraham, and Nahor. They are referred to as the “fathers from of old” (Josh 24:2). The mention is intriguing insofar as it reaches beyond what we know from the Genesis. For it recalls the fact that Terah served foreign gods, when he lived on the other bank of the Euphrates. Later, God led Abraham to the Land of Canaan and gave him his descendants: Isaac, Jacob, and Esau. Having said that, in the unanimous opinion of scholars that is considered to have been a later interpolation to the Deuteronomistic core of the book (cf. a similar text in Neh 9:6–15), although its origin and dating are still subject to considerable discussion and it cannot be ruled out that some of the traditions included in the text date back earlier than the Deuteronomist school.¹⁰ One may, for example believe that the text

⁸ The phrase “fear of Isaac” serves as the most common translation. It is possible, however, that the expression *paḥad jīṣḥāq* should rather be understood as “fearful”, “terrifying” (cf. Ps 91:5: *paḥad balēlōt* – “terror in the night”; Cant 3:8). We might be dealing here with an appellative of initially demonic connotations; H.P. Müller, *phd*, in TDOT, vol. 11, 517–26.

⁹ J. Lemański, *Księga Rodzaju*, 820.

¹⁰ W.T. Koopmans, *Joshua 24 as Poetic Narrative*, JSOT.S 93, (Sheffield: Academic Press 1990), 1–95; M. Anbar, *Josué et l'alliance de Sichem (Josué 24:1-28)*, (Frankfurt am Main: Lang 1992), 7–22; J.L. Sicre Diaz, *Giosuè*, (Roma: Borla 2004), 389–92. Looking at these debates with the consideration of the recent instances of commentaries, such a dispute can indeed be observed. For instance, the chapter is situated in the context of the developments (YHWH vs. foreign gods), necessary for the latter half of the fifth century B.C., by E.A. Knauf, *Josua*, ZBK.AT 6, (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag 2008), 193–4. Meanwhile, it is considered

of this historical summary in its entirety constituted an element of a model used during the covenant ceremony, and may have originally been associated with the Shechem Sanctuary (cf. Josh 24:2.23: YHWH Elohe [God of] Israel; Gen 33:20: Elohe [of] Israel).¹¹

Abraham

If this assumption is valid, one can imagine the figure of Abraham as being gradually introduced into the line of genealogical ties, and the first phase to have been the connection between Isaac and Jacob. The former may have become the link connecting both ancestors of the southern and northern tribes as late as at the final stage of the establishment of the patriarchal traditions. It was also then that he transferred to Abraham—not solely with the help of the editors—some of the traditions and locations (e.g., Beer-sheba) initially associated with him; the elaboration of the Abrahamic narrative also benefitted from incorporating other stories which originally had no connection with the patriarch. For instance, the tradition of the destruction of Sodom (Gen 13:13; 19), which appears in many other passages, serving as a warning for Jerusalem (Isa 1:9–10; 3:9; Jer 23:14; Ezek 16:44–58), or as a more general symbol of depravity (Amos 4:11; Zeph 2:9; Isa 13:19; Jer 49:18).

Abraham is equally scarcely mentioned in the prophetic books. There are four instances of him in the Book of Isaiah (Isa 29:22; 41:8; 51:2; 63:16), and these texts are of exilic or later origin. Subsequently, there are single mentions of the patriarch's name in Jeremiah (Jer 33:26: the three patriarch formula),¹² Ezekiel (Ezek

to have been “pre-Deuteronomistic” (eighth/seventh century B.C.) by H.N. Rösel, *Joshua*, HCOT, (Leuven-Paris: Peeters 2011), 363.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² A text obviously post-exilic; R.P. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, OTL, (Philadelphia: Westminster 1986), 634–9; W. McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah*, vol. 2: *Commentary on Jeremiah XXVI-LII*, ICC, (Edinburg: T&T Clark 1996), 860–5.

33:24), and Micah (Mic 7:30).¹³ Only the Ezekiel's reference is regarded to be "genuine," which would make it the oldest from among the texts mentioned.

The only ancestor recalled in the Book of Amos is Jacob, with Isaac appearing to be his predecessor. For it is that name that appears in parallel as an identity denomination of the inhabitants of Samaria (Amos 7:9.16). This information seems particularly interesting considering that most, if not all, prophetic books were ultimately redacted in the Kingdom of Judah, many decades after the fall of Samaria. Meanwhile, according to Amos it is Jacob to whom the role of a primogenitor for the inhabitants of both kingdoms is attributed, while after the Assyrian invasion of Samaria (722 B.C.) – only for Judah. The accusation against Judah, put forth in a rather Deuteronomistic spirit, of the people having walked with foreign gods (Amos 2:4–5), pertains rather of the Exodus generation than that of the three patriarchs. In any case, Abraham is not mentioned in the prophet's message at all. The situation is the same with another prophet from the mid-eight century B.C. Hosea, for it is him we are speaking about, makes numerous references to the traditions known from what was to be the Pentateuch.¹⁴ The problem with the dating of the chapters in his books which mention that has not been entirely resolved. However, when writing about the origins of Israel, the prophet does point to the experience of the Exodus, and the tradition of the wandering through the desert, when God had led Israel out of Egypt (Hos 11:1–2). This God later calls himself "your God ever since the land of Egypt" (Hos 13:4). Even Jacob does not emerge in the prophet's ministry as one of the protagonists. The passage devoted to him in the book (Hos 12:2–6:12) could even be read as polemical against the ancestor of not unblemished reputation, against whom the tradition of the Exodus is produced in

¹³ The mention of YHWH's loyalty towards Abraham closes the passage about the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem (Mic 7:11; cf. Esd 9:9), and about foreign nations licking dust before Israel (Mic 7:16–17); it is a sort of a "fantasy," also known from Deutero-Isaiah (Isa 49:23).

¹⁴ M. Bednarski, „Motywy Pięcioksięgu w Księdze Ozeasza,” *Collectanea Theologica* 86, no. 4 (2016): 33–62.

the form of an alternative.¹⁵ The account of Jacob opens with a mention of the birth of twin brothers (Jacob and Esau), and of Jacob's first deceit (Hos 12:4). It was the very much legend-like event, "unprecedented in the history of obstetrics" (cf. Gen 25:22–26). Then, the prophet speaks of the fight with the supernatural figure near the Jabbok River (Hos 12:5a; Gen 32:22–32), and the mysterious encounter at Bethel (Hos 12:5b; Gen 28:10–22; 33:9–15), his escape to Aram, and his shepherd's duty in return for a wife (and not two wives! Hos 12:13; cf. Gen 28:5; 29:15–30). One can entertain some valid doubts as to Hosean origin of that section (cf. Hos 12:1b – for a positive comment about Judah). However, even were we to recognise it as a mark of a later Judean redaction, the striking feature is the very fact that the editor identifies his origins with the figure of Jacob, and not that of Abraham; likewise, it will be the case of Deutero-Isaiah.¹⁶ The recap of the key motifs in the story of Jacob does not settle the issue of this text's priority over the version of it we are familiar with from the Book of Genesis.¹⁷ After all, one can either assume that Hos 12 may have had some influence on the formation of the cycle about Jacob, or believe the opposite to be the case. But equally well, the authors of both texts could have referred to the epic tradition about Jacob

¹⁵ The thesis has been put forth in numerous publications by A. de Pury. For its critical review, see H.Ch. Schmitt, "Erzvätergeschichte und Exodusgeschichte als konkurrierende Ursprungslegenden Israels – ein Irrweg der Pentateuchforschung," in A.C. Hagedorn, H. Pfeiffer, eds., *Die Erzähler in der biblische Tradition. Fs. M. Köckert*, BZAW 400, (Berlin–New York: de Gruyter 2009), 241–366.

¹⁶ As rightly underscored by J. Blenkinsopp, *Abraham*, 6.

¹⁷ A. Bentzen, "The Weeping of Jacob," *Vetus Testamentum* 1 (1951): 58–9; P.R. Ackroyd, "Hosea and Jacob," *Vetus Testamentum* 13 (1963): 245–53; E.M. Good, "Hosea and the Jacob Tradition," *Vetus Testamentum* 16 (1966): 137–45; S.L. McKenzie, "The Jacob Tradition in Hosea XII 4-5," *Vetus Testamentum* 36 (1986): 311–22; H.A. McKay, "Jacob Makes it Across the Jabbok," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 38 (1987): 3–13; A. de Pury, "Le Cycle de Jacob," in J.A. Emerton, ed., *Congress Volume Leuven 1989*, VT.S 43, (Leiden: Brill 1991), 78–96; E. Blum, "Once Again: Hosea and the Pentateuchal Traditions," in C. Werman, ed., *From Author to Copyist. Essays on the Composition, Redaction, and Transmission of the Hebrew Bible in Honor of Zipi Talshir*, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns 2015), 81–94.

regardless of one another.¹⁸ However, scholars tend to agree that the Hosean text is a testament to the authenticity of the tradition associated with Jacob, for not all the details mentioned by the prophet are mirrored in the cycle devoted to the patriarch in the Book of Genesis, neither are all the details of the cycle referred to by the prophet (especially Hos 12:13).¹⁹

Nor does the much later Book of Jeremiah feature numerous mentions of Abraham. The single instance, already indicated (Jer 33:26), appears in the conclusion of a prophecy regarding dynastic promises (Jer 33:14–26). However, the passage constitutes a variant of Jer 23:5–6, and it is missing in the LXX. We are therefore dealing, as has already been pointed out, with a fragment of a later and longer version of the book,²⁰ dated towards the end of the Persian period, whereas the expression is a classic formula of the three patriarchs (about the descendants of Abraham cf. Isa 41:8; Ps 105:6; 2 Chr 20:7). In other locations, when addressing the inhabitants of Judah, the prophet refers to them as “Jacob” (Jer 10:25; 30:5–7.18; 31:7–14), “my servant Jacob” (Jer 30:10–11; 46:27–28), and the “house of Jacob” (Jer 2:4; 5:20), whereas their God is referred to as “Lord, the portion of Jacob” (Jer 10:26; 51:19). Even in the chapters of clearly “Deutero-Isaian”²¹ undertones (Jer 30–31), the words “have no fear” are addressed to Jacob (Jer 30:10; 47:27–28; Isa 41:10.13–14; 43:5; 44:2), and so are the assurances “I am with you” (Jer 30:11; Isa 41:10; 43:5), as well as the calls to rejoice (Jer 31:7.12; Isa 54:1).²²

On the basis of biblical texts outside of the Pentateuch, it may be safely said that the figure of Abraham emerged in his full stature in the religious traditions of the biblical Israel at the breakthrough moment of its history, that is, during the Babylonian

¹⁸ M.I. Gruber, *Hosea: A Textual Commentary*, (London et al.: Bloomsbury T&T Clark 2017), 493.

¹⁹ A good, synthetic account of the issue can be found in *ibid.*, 493–504, 518–20.

²⁰ It is also confirmed by G. Fischer, *Jeremia 26-52*, HThKAT, (Freiburg–Basel–Wien: Herder 2005), 223.

²¹ Even though Deutero-Isaiah, as mentioned, most often speaks of Abraham, he nevertheless concurrently refers to his countrymen much more frequently as Jacob, “the servant of YHWH” (Isa 41:8–9; 44:1–2.21; 45:9).

²² J. Blenkinsopp, *Abraham*, 7, f.n. 12.

captivity (597–539 B.C.). It is evidenced by the exilic prophets, Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah. The former, several years after the initial expulsion intervenes in a dispute over the land left behind by the expellees (Ezek 11:14–21).²³ One of the arguments in this dispute is the Abrahamic tradition, mentioned in Ezek 33:23–29 (v. 24).²⁴ We do not know whether it constitutes “a scriptural proof,”²⁵ but it certainly is the oldest mention of the patriarch outside of the Pentateuch. It should be added that it is an entirely “lay” recollection. Abraham is presented in the role of a lone ancestor who—despite the fact he was “only one man”—managed to take possession of the land (cf. Gen 13). This argument, often made by the prophet, does not seem to be convincing either for the prophet quoting it, or for those who he strives to defend against being unlawfully deprived of the right to their land. The inhabitants left in Judea could not lay claim to the land, inherited after Abraham, solely because of the fact they had managed to avoid expulsion (cf. Ezek 11:14–15).

Towards the end of the captivity, the prophet Deutero-Isaiah will already be indicating Abraham as a role model, calling the patriarch a “friend” of God²⁶ (Isa 41:8), and pointing to him (together with his wife, Sarah) as the primogenitor of the people (Isa 51:1–2), for the first time heralded in a chronologically subsequent account of Abraham’s calling (Gen 12:2; 13:16). That, however, does not alter the fact that the prophet, as mentioned above, addresses those who had survived the calamity of the exile with the words: “But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend [or: the one who loved me]!” (Isa 41:8; NRSV). In this text, Abraham is no longer merely a name of an ancestor, he

²³ W. Pikor, *Rola ziemi w przymierzu Boga z Izraelem. Studium historyczno-teologiczne Księgi Ezechiela*, (Lublin: KUL 2013), 199–210.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 213–14.

²⁵ So, according to J. Blenkinsopp, *Abraham*, 8: “a ‘scriptural’ proof from Abraham.”

²⁶ The reading as “my friend” has been adopted not only in the translating tradition (2 Chr 20:7; Neh 9:7; Jas 2:23; Quran 4:124), even though a more adequate rendering of the active form of the verb used would be “one who loved me”; so, among others, J.L. Koole, *Isaiah III*, vol. 1: *Isaiah 40-48*, HCOT, (Kampen: KOK Pharos Publishing House 1997), 154–5.

is someone actively involved in his relationship with God. The use with relation to the patriarch of the words “friend,” and “servant” indicates that towards the end of the captivity his figure became relatively prominent in the religious tradition of the chosen people. It can also be observed in an even later passage in Isa 29:22–24,²⁷ which features the mention of “the redemption of Abraham,” but concurrently speaks of “the house of Jacob,” who had accomplished that feat and will no longer be ashamed, and of “the Holy One of Jacob [...] the God of Israel.” The hope of multiplication of the nation, as experienced already in the times of Abraham, is later brought up in another fragment by Deutero-Isaiah, Isa 51:1–2, as well as in a passage in the lamentations in Isa 63:7–64:12 (about Abraham Isa 63:15–16), perhaps slightly younger than the latter. Both these texts—as rightly observed by Joseph Blenkinsopp²⁸—convey a sense of disorientation and disconnect both from the religious and ethnic traditions, indispensable as they are in protecting one’s identity and life’s purpose.

In the Deuteronomistic texts, Abraham is evoked in connection to the other two patriarchs, Isaac and Jacob, and that in the context of the conditional promise of the land (Deut 1:8; 6:10; 9:5.27; 29:12; 30:32; 34:4); without, however, any allusions to the person or deeds of Abraham. As a result, during the recent decades the researchers have generally agreed that the exceptionally rich narrative of Abraham in Gen 11:27–25:11 does not constitute a legacy of any oral tradition from the period of the monarchy, but a fruit of theological and literary labours by the circles interested in the figure during the captivity period, and afterwards.²⁹

The fall of Babylon, and the new Persian order, entailing among other things the permission to return to the homeland, was

²⁷ We are dealing here with a later interpolation (v. 22) in an older lamentation (vv. 17–24); J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, AB 19, (New York: Doubleday 2000), 410.

²⁸ Idem, *Abraham*, 10: “A sad sense of disorientation and disconnect from the religious and ethnic traditions [...]”

²⁹ That belief has been largely influenced by the following works: Th.L. Thompson, *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives*, BZAW 133, (Berlin: de Gruyter 1974); J. Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition*, (New Haven: Yale University Press 1975); E. Blum, *Die Komposition der Vätergeschichte*, WMANT 57, (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag 1984).

interpreted as the end of punishment and an opportunity for a new beginning. The initial enthusiasm of the group of exiles who decided to return, soon turned into dejection and despondency. Such atmosphere is palpable both in the Book of Deutero-Isaiah, and in other prophets of the period (Haggai, Proto-Zechariah). Jerusalem and other major cities of Judah were still in ruin, the temple had been demolished, and the former apparatus of the State was gone. The number of inhabitants of Judah had plummeted, whereas the “waves” of returners were far from mass-scale. Regarding the latter issue, we are rather speaking of several groups of repatriates in the period of a dozen or even several dozen years after Cyrus’ decree. The reference to Abraham and Sarah, and the recognition of symbols of the patriarchal couple in the preceding metaphors (the rock and the well),³⁰ as well as the indications of the dire beginning of a great nation (cf. Isa 51:1–2) thus seem perfectly understandable at the time.³¹ It is probably then that the traditions of the great nation and of the Promised Land are articulated in the form of the promises made to Abraham, a result of God’s blessing (Gen 12:1–3; 18:18; cf. Isa 54:1; 60:21–22). That way, the patriarch turned into the primogenitor of the entire chosen people (Exod 2:24; 4:5; 32:13; cf. Mic 7:20), as well as the guarantor of the nation’s territorial claims (Exod 3:6.15; 4:5; cf. Ps 47:9). Abraham’s journey from Ur of the Chaldees³² (Gen 11:28.31) serves as a good example for the repatriates coming from Babylon. Likewise, the first action performed by the patriarch on his arrival in Canaan: the erection of an altar (Gen 12:7; cf. Ezra 3:1–3; 1 Chr 21:28–22:1).³³ Concurrently, this new perspective constitutes the transformation of Abraham – the autochthon, as we know him from the oldest

³⁰ For one could think at this juncture of the God of Israel (cf. Deut 32:18).

³¹ The discussion of the issue, can be found, among others, in H.J. Hermisson, *Deuterojesaja 49,14 – 55,13*, BK XI 3, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2017), 169–76.

³² The appellation *kašdīm* only appeared during the time of Babylonian domination (2 Kgs 25:4.13.25; Jer 21:4.9; 32:5.29; Hab 1:6; Ezek 11:24; Isa 43:14; 48:14.20).

³³ More extensively on the exiles’ identification with Abraham, see J. Blenkinsopp, *Judaism. The First Phase. The Place of Ezra and Nehemiah in the Origins of Judaism*, (Grand Rapids–Cambridge: Eerdmans 2009), 37–43.

section of the cycle (Gen 13:5–15; 18:1–10a; 19), into Abraham the pilgrim.³⁴

Hence, according to scholars involved with historical-critical studies, Abraham as the father of Isaac and the grandfather of Jacob is the result of a certain theological idea going back to the period of the Babylonian captivity and thereafter. The associations of the patriarch with Hebron suggest that he may have originally been merely a primogenitor of some eastern cluster of clans of the future tribe of Judah; one not even included within the framework of the intertribal community formerly referred to as “Israel” (cf. Judg 5). However, the attempts to establish with greater precision the development of this tradition prove difficult, for we lack credible extra-biblical sources, and thus any comparative material.³⁵ Meanwhile, the name “Israel” itself came to be used as an appellative also for the inhabitants of Judah no sooner than after the fall of Samaria (722 B.C.), and the attempt to restore the unified monarchy under Josiah (during the reforms of the years 630/622–609 B.C.). It was then that the idea emerged of a patriarchal lineage from Abraham, through Isaac to Jacob and his twelve sons, eponymous with the “twelve tribes of Israel” – the “ideal” at the foundation of the future chosen people.

Jacob

The short review of biblical texts above proves that at the outset it was Jacob who was considered to have been the primogenitor of the chosen people. The observation is substantiated, for instance, by the fact that his name is an ethnic and tribal eponym, a development mentioned in the Bible on two occasions. For the first time, near Peniel/Penuel on the east bank of the Jordan, after the patriarch’s struggle with the mysterious figure (a messenger representing God or God himself) at the River Jabbok (Gen 32:28). For the second

³⁴ A. Mühlung, “*Blick auf Abraham*,” 46. Cf. also T. Römer, “Die politische Funktion der vorpriesterlichen Abrahamtexte,” M.G. Brett, J. Wöhrle, eds., *The Politics of the Ancestors* (FAT 124) (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2018), 211–32.

³⁵ P.R. Williamson, “Abraham,” in T.D. Alexander, D.W. Baker, eds., *Dictionary of the Old Testament. Pentateuch*, (Downers Grove–Leicester: InterVarsity Press 2003), 15.

time, it is mentioned by the priestly tradition, which situates the whole event in Betel, narrating how the patriarch Jacob received a blessing from El Shaddai and was granted the guarantee of possession of that land for himself and his descendants (Gen 35:9–15). Both versions overlap in one aspect – it occurred during Jacob’s return journey to Canaan after two decades he had spent in “exile,” in Aram, at his uncle Laban’s homestead. Aram is Mesopotamia. At that time, Jacob had already had eleven sons (Gen 29:31–30:24; Benjamin was born already in Canaan: Gen 35:16–18). The subsequent stage in the development of this tradition is marked by the introduction of Ephraim and Manasseh, the sons of Joseph born in Egypt (Gen 46:27), who were featured in an alternative (territorial instead of genealogical) tradition of the twelve sons.³⁶

The central importance of Jacob can be observed in many historical and prophetic texts outside of the Book of Genesis.³⁷ In his plea addressed to the king of Edom to be allowed to cross through the latter’s territory, Moses recalls the history of his people, commencing from Jacob and his sons, who once had gone down to Egypt (Num 20:14–16).³⁸ The origins of the nation are seen in a similar vein by Samuel, when he responds to the people asking him for a king (1 Sam 12:6–15:6³⁹). Additionally, in an admonition to the Jewish diaspora in the so-called Holiness code (Lev 26:40–45), the biblical author assures his addressees that God would remember “the covenant with their ancestors [Hebr. *ri’šōnîm*],” who had brought them out of the land of Egypt (v. 45).

Ultimately, the tradition of calling back to Jacob decisively triumphed also in the liturgical tradition. Abraham is only mentioned

³⁶ J. Lemański, “Manasses – Makir – Gilead: pytanie o źródła jednej z biblijnych tradycji genealogicznych,” *Colloquia Theologica Ottoniana* 1 (2015): 25–51.

³⁷ Here, I am using the texts identified by J. Blenkinsopp, *Abraham*, 11–15.

³⁸ This reworking of an older anecdote (cf. Deut 2:3–6) includes fragments of an earlier tradition (vv. 14.16ab.19[without the introduction].21); so according to H. Seebass, *Numeri. Kapitel 10,11-22,1*, BK. IV/2, (Neukirchen–Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag 2003), 291–2.

³⁹ This time we are in all likelihood dealing with a subsequent “dogmatic revision,” and hence with a gloss; so according to W. Dietrich, *1 Samuel 1–12*, BKVIII/1, (Neukirchen–Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag 2010), 534.

in two of one hundred and fifty psalms (Pss 47:9; 105:6.9.42). “The God of Abraham” is evoked only once (Ps 47:9), meanwhile, they call to “the God of Jacob” numerous times thereafter. Ancestors are considered to have been those whom YHWH brought out of Egypt, led by Moses and Aaron. Psalm 78, which in its final form appears to be an anti-Samaritan text (vv. 9–11.67–69), opens the historical panorama ranging from the Exodus to God’s rejection of Ephraim, and the selection of Jerusalem and David. Many other psalms, when reminiscing of the historical origins of Israel, also tend to underscore the priority of the generation “brought out of Egypt”; nevertheless, it was not always considered a good example (Ps 78:56–64; 79:8–10; 95:8–11; 106:6–33). At no point is Abraham mentioned in that context. He is also absent from the list of abominations committed by the nation’s ancestors, compiled by Ezekiel (Ezek 20:4–38). In the first position, he mentions here Israel / the house of Jacob and their being brought out of Egypt (v. 5; cf. Exod 6:2-4). The experiences of the forebears in the wilderness and in the land of Egypt (God’s judgement) constitute a harbinger of identical judgement of the current generation (v. 36). The future generations, however, will inhabit the land promised by YHWH to his servant Jacob / his descendants (Ezek 37:25).

Also the Deuteronomist text in Deut 26:5–10,⁴⁰ introducing the prayer recited when offering *primitiae*, reminiscent in its message to a kind of a canonical creed, first mentions Jacob and the going down to Egypt: “A wandering Aramaean was my father, and he went down to Egypt and sojourned there, a few males, and there he became a great nation, mighty and many [...] and YHWH brought us out from Egypt [...] and he brought us into this place, and he gave to us this land [...].”

Gerhard von Rad ranked this text among his “little historical creeds,” recognising not only the typically Deuteronomist terminology, but also some elements of the earlier material.⁴¹ The

⁴⁰ Cf. the historical-critical analysis in E. Otto, *Deuteronomium 23,16 – 34,12*, HThKAT, (Freiburg–Basel–Wien: Herder 2017), 1885–9.

⁴¹ G. von Rad, *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament*, (München: Kaiser 1961), 11–16 (the text was first published in 1938); cf. idem, *Teologia Starego*

thesis of such a historical, ancient *credo* did not stand scrutiny.⁴² However, even the mention of a wandering Aramean is in itself archaic, suggesting a reference rather to Jacob than to Abraham. According to Eckart Otto, this older Deuteronomist core was later reworked by the priestly authors, who wanted to see it as an allusion to the later Abrahamic tradition (e.g., Gen 12:10; 18:18).⁴³ That way, it is only after the return from the exile that both patriarchal lineages were merged. Another issue is the fact that none of the patriarchs is ever referred to as an Aramean, though there are mentions of both patriarchs being associated with Aram-Naharaim (Gen 24:10.24), and with Laban the Aramean (Gen 25:20; 28:5; 31:20.24). In the text of 1QapGen, it is Abraham who is clearly presented as the wandering Aramean.⁴⁴ When the Israelites pray to the God of their ancestors (Deut 26:7) after the “little *credo*,” and later make the first-fruit offerings, pleading for a blessing according to the promise made to their ancestors, the language of that prayer is also rather reminiscent of the tradition of Abraham than that of Jacob (Deut 26:15).⁴⁵

Thus, we do not possess—besides the Pentateuch—many texts mentioning the figure of the patriarch Abraham, when narrating the origins of Israel. Meanwhile, among the elements often recalled in this context are the patriarch Jacob, the descent to Egypt, and the exodus from Egypt, from the land of the pharaohs, performed by the nation of the patriarch’s descendants. A review and the dating of

Testamentu, pol. trans. B. Widła, (Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy Pax 1986), 104–6. The history of the discussion of this thesis was later reviewed by E. Otto, “Gerhard von Rad als Deuteronomiumskommentator. Klärungen aus zeitlichem Abstand,” in B.M. Levinson, E. Otto, eds., *Recht und Ethik im Alten Testament*, ATM 13, (Münster: LIT Verlag 2004), 1–28.

⁴² E. Otto, *Deuteronomium 23,16 – 34,12*, 1881–5.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 1897.

⁴⁴ J.R. Lundbom, *Deuteronomy. A Commentary*, (Grand Rapids–Cambridge: Eerdmans 2013), 726.

⁴⁵ E. Otto, *Deuteronomium 23,16 – 34,12*, 1890, 1900 classifies this line as a “nachexilische Fortschreibung.”

biblical texts regarding Abraham enable one to draw two fundamental conclusions. Firstly, besides the standard, post exilic formula – “Abraham, Isaac, Jacob,” Abraham does not appear in an unequivocal manner in any of the texts from before the Babylonian captivity. And secondly, it was precisely during that period when Abraham started to serve as the role model for those wishing to return from exile, who interpreted the situation as “the new beginning” in Judah under the Persian rule.

If we assume that there occurred the aforementioned “post-Abrahamic” reinterpretation of the liturgical creed of Deut 26:5–10, the introduction to Joshua’s covenant-making at Shechem becomes comprehensible. As we have seen, it features as the primogenitors Terah, Abraham, and Nahor (Josh 24:2). The idea to “trace back” the genealogical links from Jacob to Abraham, and to draw the entire lineage from Terah—the last survivor of the antediluvian humanity, who would constitute a bridge of sorts to the legendary history of the chosen people—did not stem solely from the need of the moment, that is, the demographic and political situation shortly after the return from the Babylonian captivity. It was also influenced by the concept of the very book pertaining to the roots of the nation and its universal mission given by God, namely, the then created Book of Genesis. Until that moment, the inhabitants of Judah identified themselves as the descendants of Abraham, whereas those living in the territories north of Jerusalem as the offspring of Jacob. The choice of Abraham as the primogenitor to have been called by God, and his linking to Jacob *via* Isaac, finds justification, firstly, in the fact that the Abrahamic traditions constituted a natural point of reference in the search of identity undertaken by the inhabitants of Judah after they have returned from the captivity, and, secondly, in that these post-exilic Judeans adopted (perhaps already during the reign of Josiah)⁴⁶ the already theological sense of the notion of “Israel.” Until that point, the yet-to-be-codified traditions regarding Abraham as the primogenitor of Judeans roamed freely and constituted a sort of a response to the political catastrophe that the

⁴⁶ N. Na’aman, “Saul, Benjamin and the Emergence of »Biblical Israel«” (part I), *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 121 (2009): 211–24.

fall of the Kingdom of Judah had certainly been.⁴⁷ It was only during its merging process with the already better established tradition of Jacob, that the tradition of Abraham also became the subject or remodelling and reinterpretation. The issue of whether its “enrichment and elaboration” occurred on the basis and at the expense of the tradition of Isaac, which had been associated with the tradition of Jacob (cf. Amos), and whether the combination of the patriarchal traditions with that of the Exodus took place still during the period of the monarchy (cf. Hosea), or whether towards the end of the captivity or even thereafter, has remained unsolved, even though—regarding the latter problem—most scholars tend to lean towards the theory of the priestly school as the milieu responsible for the merger of both traditions.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ J. Blenkinsopp, *Abraham*, 14–15.

⁴⁸ K. Schmid, *Erzväter und Exodus: Untersuchungen zur doppelten Ursprünge Israels innerhalb der Geschichtsbücher des Alten Testament*, WMANT 81, (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag 1999); Th.C. Römer, “Les histoires des Patriarches et la légende de Moïse: une double origine?,” in D. Doré, ed., *Comment la Bible saisit-elle l’histoire?*, (Paris: Cerf 2007), 155–96. The period of the monarchy (i.e., the period of Hosea) is the choice of the already-cited H.Ch. Schmitt, *Erzvätergeschichte*, 241–66. For the discussion of these matters one can also consult J. Lemański, *Księga Rodzaju rozdziały 1–11*, NKB.ST I/1, (Częstochowa: Św. Paweł 2013), 66–9.