

# VI

## REDACTIONAL STRUCTURING AND SOURCE CRITICISM

The first five chapters of this book demonstrate conclusively that the stories of Genesis are aligned not in an ad hoc or haphazard manner, rather along well-conceived and deliberate lines. In the Primeval History, the compiler established a pattern in 1:1–6:8 which was then repeated (with one necessary alteration) in 6:9–11:26. In the Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph Cycles, sequences were created in 11:27–16:16, 25:19–30:24, and 37:1–44:34 respectively, and then repeated in reverse order in 17:1–22:24, 30:25–35:22, and 45:1–50:26 respectively. The result, when combined with the linking material in 23:1–25:18 and 35:23–36:43, is a redactional structure for all of Genesis. Within this masterful operation we may even note the difference between the ordering of the Primeval History representing pre-Israelite times and that of the Patriarchal Cycles representing Israelite times. In the former the structure is built on purely parallel lines, while in the latter the stories are aligned chiastically. Similarly, the Primeval History stands alone, while the cycles comprising the Patriarchal History are interspersed with the linking material.

Why the final editor of Genesis saw the need for such a redactional structure is difficult to say. His aim may have been theological, that is to say, to show how God's relationship with man and his election of Israel are not haphazard occurrences but are in fact well-established

and well-conceived by God himself. Or his goal may have been purely literary, that is, to merely construct a perfectly designed literary unit. As M. Fishbane has noted, similar symmetry and/or chiasm has been detected in Homer's *Iliad*, in the Atrahasis Epic of ancient Mesopotamia, and in various shorter portions of the Hebrew Bible.<sup>1</sup> Or, more likely, it may have been a combination of both, perhaps with other motivations as well (didactic, mnemonic, etc.). But regardless of the why, we seem to have answered the how. For while we can only speculate as to what the redactor's ultimate aim was, we can uncover how he accomplished his task. In a seminal article on the redaction of Proverbs, Patrick Skehan concluded, "For the first time, it would appear, we know exactly how one Old Testament writer put his book together, and how much he put into it when he did so."<sup>2</sup> Now, it seems, we have a second instance where we have uncovered the *modus operandi* of an individual who bears ultimate responsibility for the final edition of a biblical book.

The establishment of a basic unity in the Book of Genesis by necessity leads to a discussion of Higher Criticism. The dominant school of Higher Criticism, the Documentary Hypothesis, divides Genesis into three major strands, the Yahwist (J), the Elohist (E), and the Priestly

<sup>1</sup> See the sources cited by M. Fishbane, *Text and Texture* (New York, 1979) 146, nn 4–6; and M. Fishbane, "Composition and Structure in the Jacob Cycle (Gen. 25:19–35:22)," *JJS* 26 (1975) 19, nn 21–26. For a more complete sampling of studies which posit redactional structures in Hebrew and Greek literatures, see J. Dewey, *Markan Public Debate* (Chico, CA, 1980) 34–35, 206–7, nn 125–53. Many thanks to my colleague, Dennis C. Duling, for bringing this reference to my attention. The list of palistrophes compiled by A. DiMarco ("Der Chiasmus in der Bibel, 1. Teil," *LB* 36 (1975) 21–97; "Der Chiasmus in der Bibel, 2. Teil," *LB* 37 (1976) 49–68) is impressive but many are either very minor or not present at all.

<sup>2</sup> P. W. Skehan, "Wisdom's House," in *Studies in Israelite Poetry and Wisdom* (Washington, DC, 1971) 45 (revised version of CBQ 29 [1967] 162–80).

(P).<sup>3</sup> It is true that recognition of redactional structuring does not a priori militate against the conclusions of the JEDP Theory. Fishbane, for example, in his treatment of the Jacob Cycle, wrote, "This is not to side-step 'documentary' issues. For it is clear that the Jacob Cycle has been composed from numerous traditions. It is, however, the point of this paper to see what was 'done' with these traditions."<sup>4</sup> In other words, it is possible that the Genesis compiler merely took the J, E, and P materials, and edited them in a manner to produce the corresponding sections. This would hold, of course, for the other cycles of Genesis no less than for the Jacob Cycle.

U. Cassuto took a more negative view toward the Documentary Hypothesis in his discussion of redactional structuring in the Abraham Cycle. He concluded, "The perfected form of this structure does not support the view espoused by most modern exegetes, who regard the text as the accidental product of the combination of a number of fragments from various sources. . . . This theory and the problem of the sources of the narratives in general we shall discuss later."<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, the author's death prevented him from completing this task, though a few pertinent sentences may be culled from the commentary on 12:1–13:5 which survived. But even these statements do not speak to the specific point of how the cycle's unity contradicts the JEDP Theory. Thus it is difficult to predict what route Cassuto would have used.

<sup>3</sup> In this chapter, I speak of the Documentary Hypothesis as a single approach to the Pentateuch. Clearly, I am aware of the faults of this judgment, since not all scholars agree on the various strata and sub-strata, their dates of composition, etc. But it is commonplace, especially in handbooks, textbooks, and introductions to the Bible, to speak of the theory in the singular and to regard it as a scholarly consensus. So without entering into the finesse of the slightly divergent views, I beg the reader's acceptance of the notion that there exists a more or less unified position among biblicalists, which would order the sources JEDP and would date them respectively to the 10th, 9th–8th, 7th, and 6th–5th centuries.

<sup>4</sup> Fishbane, "Composition and Structure," 26, n 39.

<sup>5</sup> U. Cassuto, *From Noah to Abraham* (Jerusalem, 1964) 294.

This does not mean that Cassuto's basic assumption is incorrect. Notwithstanding my comments above that redactional unity need not a priori defeat the JEDP Theory, it must be admitted that wherever the basic unity of a section can be established the Documentary Hypothesis can be called into question. This is even more the case when specific evidence can be forwarded to show the failing of this school of source criticism. Let us then proceed to this evidence.

The corresponding units in each of the cycles were seen as parallel not just because of their similar themes and motifs, but just as importantly because of the numerous theme-words which link them. Now, when traditional source criticism assigns corresponding units to different sources, we must wonder how is it that source X uses theme-words a, b, c, d, e, f, g, etc., and that source Y uses the exact theme-words. This is no better seen than in a comparison of 12:1–9 and 22:1–19 (chap. II, units B and B' [henceforth II.B/B']). The first of these is usually divided between J (vv 1–4a, 6–9) and P (vv 4b–5) and the second of these is viewed as E. We should ask: how is it that J uses *lek l'kā* in 12:1 and that E does so in 22:1; that J uses the second person masculine singular pronoun suffix three times in 12:1 and that E does so in 22:2; that J has Abram go to Moreh in 12:6 and that E takes Abraham to Moriah in 22:2; that J reads *wayyiben šām mizbēah laYHWH* in 12:7 and that E uses *wayyiben šām ʾabrāhām ʾet hammizbēah* in 22:9; that J's blessing in 12:2–3 is remarkably similar to E's blessing in 22:17–18; that J reads *wayyēlek ʾittō lōt* in 12:4 and that E states *wayyēl'kū šnēhem yaḥdāw* in 22:6, 22:8; that J uses *m'qôm* in 12:6 and that E uses *hammāqôm* in 22:3–4, both times meaning 'hallowed site'; that the root *škm* occurs in J in 12:6 and in E in 22:3; that J uses *wayyērāʾ YHWH* in 12:7 and that E includes the toponym *YHWH yirʾeh* in 22:14; that J's story ends in the Negev and that E's story ends in Beersheba; and that both stories have God speaking to the patriarch in two parts, in J at 12:1–3, 12:7, and in E at 22:12, 22:16–18? All of this becomes extremely coincidental and much too difficult to

explain if one retains the JEP source analysis of Genesis. The evidence points to one author for these two units.

Similar problems arise in comparing the other matched units. The Creation and Flood units (I.A/A') are universally divided into J material and P material. But we note the following difficulties: P uses *šbt* in 2:2–3 and J does so in 8:22; J uses *ʿešem* in 2:23 and P does so in 7:13; J uses *mithallēk* in 3:8 and P uses *hithallek* in 6:9; J introduces the war instrument *ḥereb* in 3:24 and P does so with *qešet* in 9:13–16; and J uses *derek* in 3:24 and P uses *darkô* in 6:12.

Returning to the Abraham Cycle, we note the similar genealogies (II.A/A') and note that in each case one important grandchild is singled out, even though 11:27–32 is supposedly P and 22:20–24 is supposedly J. The same holds for those sections which discuss Sarai/Sarah in the foreign palace (II.Ca/C'a). Scholars emphasize the differences in 12:10–20 and 20:1–18 and thus assign the former to J and the latter to E, but the similarities between them as presented in chap. II might also point to just one hand being responsible. We might conclude similarly vis-à-vis the two sections dealing with the parting of one of Abraham's relatives. 13:5–18 and 21:1–21 (II.Cc/C'c) have plenty of shared theme-words, though once again the respective verses are normally seen as emanating from different sources. Thus, *rīb* in 13:7 is J and *rôbeh* in 21:20 is E; *wayyiššāʾ lōt ʾet ʿēnāw wayyarʾ* in 13:10 is J and *wayyipqah ʾēlôhim ʾet ʿēnehâ wattēreʾ* in 21:19 is E; *mišrayim* in 13:10 is J and the same word in 21:21 is E; *zarʾākâ* in 13:15–16 is J and the same word in 21:13 is E; and the root *šym* in 13:16 is J and in 21:18 it is E. Again, it becomes extremely coincidental to assume that J and E have such similar vocabulary when discussing different events, the parting of Abram and Lot and the parting of Abraham and Ishmael.

In the Jacob Cycle the evidence is no less compelling. The initial and final units (III.A/A') share numerous theme-words and those which appear in verses ascribed to different sources certainly militate against the Documentary Hypothesis. We must wonder how it is that J

presents the oracle in 25:23 and that P describes its fulfillment in 35:11–12; that Jacob is named by J in 25:26 and that Israel is introduced by P in 35:10; that the pun on *bkr/brk* occurs in J in 25:31–34 but in P in 35:9–12; and that J uses *rbh* in 25:23 and that P uses this root in 35:11. Using the same two sections but presenting material assigned to J and E now, we can continue to ask how it is that J has Rebekah struggle in childbirth in 25:21–22 and that E has Rachel do likewise in 35:16–20; and that parental differences are highlighted by J in 25:28 and by E in 35:18. If redactional structuring is accepted, it becomes exceedingly difficult for the subscribers to the JEDP Theory to explain these shared theme-words which purportedly emanate from different sources.

As is already apparent, examples such as the above, where the same or similar vocabulary appears in matching units which are usually assigned to different sources, can be multiplied with ease. To show only a few more examples from the Jacob Cycle, we may note *wayyālen šam* in 28:11 from E and in 32:14 from J; *wayyîrā<sup>3</sup>* in 28:17 from E and in 32:8 from J; *maškur-* in 29:15 from E and in 31:7, 31:41 from J; *š<sup>4</sup>kārî* in 30:18 from E and in 30:32–33 from J. The first two of these examples are embodied in III.D/D'; the third is in III.E/E'; and the fourth is in III.F/F'. Finally the Joseph Story is no different, with *wayyir<sup>3</sup>û* in 37:4 from J and in 50:15 from E; *wayyêl<sup>4</sup>kû* in 37:12 from J and in 50:18 from E; and *bl* in 37:34–35 from E and in 50:10–11 from J; to quote several examples from V.A/A'.<sup>6</sup>

All of this material demonstrates how attention to redactional structuring greatly weakens the Documentary Hypothesis, indeed according to the present writer, renders it untenable. To return to our first example (II.B/B'), it becomes simply incredulous that J wrote 12:1–4a, 12:6–9 about the start of Abraham's spiritual odyssey

and that E wrote 22:1–19 about the climax of his spiritual odyssey, and that these two authors living approximately 100 years apart and in different parts of ancient Israel time and again chose the same lexical items. Surely this is too improbable, especially when such examples can be and have been multiplied over and over. Admittedly a corresponding word here or there could be coincidental, but the cumulative nature of the evidence tips the scales heavily against the usual division of Genesis into JEP.

The nexuses which bridge successive units are also problematic for proponents of the Documentary Hypothesis. We will refrain from piling up the evidence as we did for the theme-words, for one good example from the Joseph Story will suffice. We have seen that the Judah and Tamar episode (V.B) is linked to the first unit of this cycle (V.A) with a number of catchwords. 38:1–30 is assigned to J while at least the end of the preceding chapter, 37:29–36 is the work of E. And yet we must ask how it is that E uses *way<sup>4</sup>šall<sup>4</sup>hu . . . hakker nā<sup>3</sup> . . . wayyakkîrāh* in 37:32–33 and that J uses *šāl<sup>4</sup>hāh . . . hakker nā<sup>3</sup> . . . wayyakkēr* in 38:25–26; that E uses *nḥm* in 37:35 and that J uses the same root in 38:12; and that E uses *izzîm* in 37:31 and that J does so in 38:17.

The evidence presented here points to the following conclusion: there is much more uniformity and much less fragmentation in the book of Genesis than generally assumed. The standard division of Genesis into J, E, and P strands should be discarded. This method of source criticism is a method of an earlier age, predominantly of the 19th century. If new approaches to the text, such as literary criticism of the type advanced here, deem the Documentary Hypothesis unreasonable and invalid, then source critics will have to rethink earlier conclusions and start anew.

A good place to start might be the Abraham Cycle, for we have seen that the use of Yahweh in 11:27–16:16 and of Yahweh and Elohim in 17:1–22:24 has more to do with the redactional unity of these chapters than with

<sup>6</sup> On other aspects pertinent to this discussion, see the oft-cited article by R. N. Whybray, "The Joseph Story and Pentateuchal Criticism," VT 18 (1968) 522–28.

source-critical fragmentation. The use of the name Elohim from 17:3 onward has nothing to do with the proposal that now we have narratives emanating from E and P, rather it marks the pivot point of the Cycle as highlighted also by the patriarch's name change. Higher critics would have a difficult time explaining how J uses Abram in those sections ascribed to him in 11:27–16:16 but Abraham in those sections ascribed to him in 17:1–22:24. The name change in 17:5 supposedly stems from P (presumed by every critic to be post-J); thus how is it that J just happened to use Abram in, for example, the story of Ishmael's birth, but Abraham in, for example, the story of his negotiations with Yahweh to save Sodom and Gomorrah from destruction? These are questions which are not faced by most conventional exegetes; the answers to them bring down the Documentary Hypothesis.

This does not mean that all of Genesis is the work of one author,<sup>7</sup> for there clearly remain different sources and variant traditions. The author of 1:1–2:4a must clearly be someone different than the author of 2:4b–3:24. The tradition which makes Cain a nomad in 4:12–16 is certainly at variance with the one which depicts him building a city in 4:17. But, we must posit one compiler or collator for the Primeval History, one for the Abraham Cycle, one for the Jacob Cycle, and one for the Joseph Story. Whether these four compilers are the same person—in which case we can posit a single editor for the whole book of Genesis<sup>8</sup>—or not, is a question which cannot be answered. But given the systematic working of the entire redactional structure, this would not be a difficult conclusion to reach.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Compare the view of DiMarco, "Der Chiasmus in der Bibel, 1. Teil," 28: "Alle diese wiederholten Chiasmen und Symmetrien [in Gen 1–11] legen nahe, dass es sich um nur einen Autor handelt."

<sup>8</sup> For a parallel see P. W. Skehan, "A Single Editor for the Whole Book of Proverbs," in *Studies in Israelite Poetry and Wisdom*, 15–26 (revised version of CBQ 10 [1948] 115–30).

<sup>9</sup> Also pointing to this conclusion are the many excellent points raised by R. L. Cohn, "Narrative Structure and Canonical Perspective in Genesis," *ISOT* 25 (1983) 3–16.

## VII

### THE DATE OF GENESIS

The major goal of this monograph—to describe the literary technique of the redactor of Genesis—has already been accomplished. But in a work entitled *The Redaction of Genesis*, it seems appropriate to include some information on the date of that redaction, and thus this final chapter. The question, when did Genesis receive its final edited form, has consumed modern biblical scholarship from the outset. The various views are well-known and will not be reviewed here. Moreover, we will progress quite independently, except to refer to the seminal article of Benjamin Mazar, "The Historical Background of the Book of Genesis," in which the Israeli savant proposes the Davidic empire for the period of Genesis' original, and more or less complete, written form.<sup>1</sup> This conclusion, which is by no means Mazar's alone,<sup>2</sup> is accepted here, and evidence to substantiate it will be presented in systematic (though not always detailed<sup>3</sup>) fashion.

The clearest evidence pointing to a Davidic–Solomonic redaction of Genesis are the historical allusions

<sup>1</sup> B. Mazar, "The Historical Background of the Book of Genesis," *JNES* 28 (1969) 73–83.

<sup>2</sup> Even source critics who accept the JEP division would agree to some extent, since the "Yahwistic" material presumably dates from the 10th century.

<sup>3</sup> I realize that much of what I shall say has been pointed out innumerable times, but no attempt is made to cite secondary literature with any consistency or completeness. Also, each point raised could be discussed for pages on end; for economy's sake, however, discussion is kept to a minimum.