II

THE ABRAHAM CYCLE

The Primeval History ends at 11:26 with the mention of Terah's progeny, and the very next verse begins what we term the Abraham Cycle. In 1:1–11:26 the concern is universalistic; from 11:27 on the concern is particularistic. The events described in the Primeval History befell all mankind. The succeeding chapters will focus on one small subset of mankind, the people Israel, and the story of that nation begins with Abraham, its first patriarch.

The standard view regarding the Abraham Cycle is that "the various stories are but loosely connected. Almost any one, with the possible exception of the stories of the call of Abraham and of the sacrifice of Isaac, might have been omitted without having seriously impaired the unity of the Abraham story as a whole, and without our being conscious that anything was lacking."[1] But such is not the case, for a redactional structuring similar to that discussed in chap. I is also forthcoming in the Abraham Cycle.

Every commentator on Genesis has remarked on the duplication of 12:10–20 and 20:1–18 (as well as the triplicate in 26:6–11). Many scholars have also pointed out similarities between 12:1–9 and 22:1–19, for they are the two episodes central to Abraham's life as specifically mentioned in the above quotation. But it was not until among the last words ever penned by the great savant, U. Cassuto, that all the Abraham stories were seen as

[1] J. Morgenstern, The Book of Genesis (New York, 1965) 188.

duplicates of one another. Cassuto spoke of ten trials or ordeals which Abraham undergoes[2] and wrote as follows:

> Note should also be taken of the chiastic parallelism between the ten episodes. The last trial corresponds to the first. (*Go from your country* etc.; *and go to the land of Moriah* etc.; in the former passage there is the command to leave his father, in the latter to bid farwell [sic] to his son; in both episodes the blessings and promises are similar in content and in phrasing). The penultimate two tests parallel the pair of tests following the first (in the earlier trials Sarai is in danger from Pharaoh, and Lot goes away; in the later ordeals Sarah's peril stems from Abimelech, and Hagar and Ishmael depart; in both sets of tests a sanctuary is founded and the name of the Lord is proclaimed). The seventh episode corresponds to the fourth (in both Lot is in jeopardy and is saved). Similarly, the sixth trial parallels the fifth (both appertain to Ishmael and Isaac).[3]

In this chapter, the basic structure outlined by Cassuto is accepted. It was not our privilege to see the master's work completed, so we have no idea how far he would have carried forth and built on this foundation. In the pages that follow many details are set forth which sustain Cassuto's schema. Two controls in the Abraham Cycle, to be discussed below, act as a litmus test and point to the fundamental accuracy of his proposal. Finally, I expand Cassuto's structure to include the individual units immediately preceding and following the ten ordeals.

The structure of 11:27–22:24 is therefore as follows:

A   Genealogy of Terah (11:27–32)
B   Start of Abram's Spiritual Odyssey (12:1–9)
C   Sarai in foreign palace; ordeal ends in peace and success; Abram and Lot part (12:10–13:18)
D   Abram comes to the rescue of Sodom and Lot (14:1–24)

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[2] Abraham's ten trials are already referred to in rabbinic literature, most prominently in Avot 5:4. See also the sources cited by L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* V (Philadelphia, 1953) 218, n 52.
[3] U. Cassuto, *From Noah to Abraham* (Jerusalem, 1964) 296. The quotation comes from an appendix to this work, a fragment of Part Three of the author's commentary on Genesis.

E   Covenant with Abram; Annunciation of Ishmael (15:1–16:16)
E'   Covenant with Abraham; Annunciation of Isaac (17:1–18:15)
D'   Abraham comes to the rescue of Sodom and Lot (18:16–19:38)
C'   Sarah in foreign palace; ordeal ends in peace and success; Abraham and Ishmael part (20:1–21:34)
B'   Climax of Abraham's Spiritual Odyssey (22:1–19)
A'   Genealogy of Nahor (22:20–24)

In the Primeval History the redactional structuring was built along parallel lines. Five episodes (A, B, C, D, E) occur and are then repeated, with one necessary exception, in matching order (A', B', C', E', D'). In the Abraham Cycle a different system is used, one which Cassuto labels "chiastic parallelism." Five units are included (A, B, C, D, E) and are then duplicated in reverse order (E', D', C', B', A'). As was done in chap. I, let us proceed to an analysis of each of the matching pairs.

A GENEALOGY OF TERAH (11:27–32)

A' GENEALOGY OF NAHOR (22:20–24)

These two units act as bookends for the Abraham Cycle, encasing the essential events in the life of the first patriarch. In the first one the family of Abraham's father, Terah, is discussed. In the second one the family of Abraham's brother, Nahor, is treated. Three points further link the two genealogies.

i.   In 11:27, one important grandchild, Lot, is mentioned, and he is the offspring of the last-named son, Haran. In 22:23, one important grandchild, Rebekah, is mentioned, and she is the offspring of the last-named son (of the primary wife), Bethuel. In both cases, this grandchild will play a prominent role in the chapters that follow.[4]

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[4] On the introduction of Lot and Rebekah in these genealogies, see N. M. Sarna, "The Anticipatory Use of Information as a Literary Feature of the Genesis Narratives," in *The Creation of Sacred Literature* (ed. R. E. Friedman; Berkeley, 1981) 78–80.

ii. In 11:29 a character otherwise not central to the narratives is introduced with the word ʾăbî, namely, ʾăbî yiskâ, 'father of Iscah.' In 22:21, the same phenomenon occurs with ʾăbî ʾărām, 'father of Aram.' But in each case there is a rationale for mentioning the character. In 11:29 Iscah is introduced to inform us that Nahor's father-in-law Haran is not the same individual as his brother Haran.[5] In 22:21 we learn of Aram because of the prominent place Paddan Aram and Aram Naharaim will have in the Jacob Cycle.[6]

iii. In 11:30 we read of the childless Sarai whom we are to contrast with the very fertile Milcah and Reumah in 22:20–24.

Scholars have wondered why the Nahor genealogy was placed in its present position. Gerhard von Rad wrote, "The section is told as an event in Abraham's life (v. 20). But one can see immediately that an Aramean genealogy exists here, which is incorporated artlessly into the biographical context of the narrative."[7] By recognizing the redactional structuring in the Abraham Cycle we are able to discover the compiler's mastery and see 22:20–24 as the matching bookend to 11:27–32. Far from being carried out "artlessly," the redactor has performed his task brilliantly and artistically.

B START OF ABRAM'S SPIRITUAL ODYSSEY (12:1–9)

B' CLIMAX OF ABRAHAM'S SPIRITUAL ODYSSEY (22:1–19)

Not only Cassuto but other commentators as well have noted the relationship between these two sections.[8]

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[5] Cassuto, *From Noah to Abraham*, 277.

[6] Sarna, "The Anticipatory Use of Information as a Literary Feature of the Genesis Narratives," 80.

[7] G. von Rad, *Genesis* (Philadelphia, 1961) 240.

[8] N. M. Sarna, *Understanding Genesis* (New York, 1966) 160–61; R. Davidson, *Genesis 12–50* (Cambridge, 1979) 94; and B. Jacob, *Das*

Most prominent among these is Nahum Sarna, whose term "spiritual odyssey" is here adopted. He recognized the following eight parallels and theme-words shared by B and B':[9]

i. 12:1–9 marks the first occasion on which God speaks to Abram; and 22:1–19 is appropriately the last such occasion.

ii. In 12:1 God says lek lᵉkā . . . ʾel hāʾāreṣ ʾăšer ʾarʾekā, 'go forth . . . to the land which I will show you'; in 22:2 God says lek lᵉkā ʾel ʾereṣ hammôriyyâ . . . ʾăšer ʾômar ʾēlekā, 'go forth to the land of Moriah . . . which I will point out to you.'[10]

iii. In each instance, the exact destination of the patriarch's journey is unknown.

iv. Descriptive epithets are accumulated to heighten the tension of the drama. In 12:1 we read mêʾarṣᵉkā ûmimmôladtᵉkā ûmibbêt ʾābîkā, 'from your land, from your homeland, and from your father's house'; and in 22:2 we read ʾet binkā ʾet yᵉḥîdkā ʾăšer ʾāhabtā ʾet yiṣḥāq, 'your son, your favorite, Isaac whom you love.' In each case, the second person masculine singular pronoun suffix -kā or -tā is used three times to direct our attention further to Abraham.

v. In B father and son leave each other; in B' father and son were prepared to see each other for the last time. The former represents a break with the past; the latter with the future.[11]

vi. In 12:6 Abram's journey takes him to môreh and in 22:2 the destination is môriyyâ.[12]

vii. In 12:7 we have wayyiben šām mizbēaḥ laYHWH, 'he built there an altar to Yahweh'; and in 22:9 we have wayyiben šām ʾabrāhām ʾet hammizbēaḥ, 'Abraham built there the altar.'

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[9] Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, 160–61.

[10] Jacob (*Das erste Buch der Tora: Genesis*, 493) also discusses the use of lek lᵉkā in these two contexts.

[11] As noted by Jacob (*Das erste Buch der Tora: Genesis*, 493) and Davidson (*Genesis 12–50*, 94).

[12] As Cassuto (*From Noah to Abraham*, 327) notes, the LXX translates both terms, whatever their designations, with the same word ὑψηλήν, 'high.' Were the Septuagint translators trying to show the relationship

viii.   The blessings given to Abraham in B and B' are strikingly similar. In 12:2 we have *weᵉeᶜeśkâ leɡôy ɡādôl*, 'I will make you a great nation'; and in 22:17 we read *weharbāh ᵓarbeh ᵓet zarᶜākā*, 'I will exceedingly multiply your seed.' In 12:2 we have *wa ᵓăbārekᵉkā . . . berākâ*, 'I will bless you . . . a blessing'; and in 22:17 we read *bārēk ᵓăbārekᵉkā*, 'I will abundantly bless you.' In 12:3 we have *ûmᵉqallelkā ᵓāᵓôr*, 'those who curse you I will curse'; and in 22:17 we read *weyîraš zarᶜăkâ ᵓēt šaᶜar ᵓōybāw*, 'your seed shall inherit the gate of its enemies.' And finally, in 12:3 we have *wenibrᵉkû bᵉkā kōl mišpᵉḥōt ha ᵓădāmâ*, 'all the families of the earth will be blessed through you'; and in 22:18 we read *wehitbārᵉkû bᵉzar ᶜākā kōl ɡôyê hā ᵓāreṣ*, 'all the nations of the earth will be blessed through your seed.'[13]

Still other correspondences between these two pericopes may be seen.

ix.   12:4 states *wayyēlek ᵓittô lôṭ*, 'Lot went with him'; and 22:6, 22:8 state *wayyēlᵉkû šᵉnêhem yaḥdāw*, 'the two of them went on together.'

x.   *wayyiqqaḥ*, 'he (Abra[ha]m) took,' occurs in 12:5 and 22:3.

xi.   12:5 refers to *ᵓet hannepeš ᵓăšer ᶜāśû bᵉḥārān*, 'the people he acquired in Haran'; two of whom are presumably *ᵓet šᵉnê nᵉᶜārāw*, 'the two servants,' in 22:3.

xii.   *mᵉqôm*, 'place,' occurs in 12:6; and *hammāqôm*, 'the place,' appears in 22:3–4. More significantly, the word is used with the connotation 'hallowed site' in both instances.[14]

xiii. *šᵉkem*, 'Shechem,' is prominent in B, in 12:6; and this is echoed in B' with the verb *wayyaškēm*, 'he arose,' in 22:3.

xiv.   The appearance of God to Abram in B is significant, as with *wayyērā ᵓ YHWH ᵓel ᵓabrām*, 'Yahweh appeared

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[13] Cassuto (*From Noah to Abraham*, 296–97) also notes that, not coincidentally, these two blessings each contain seven expressions of benison.

[14] See S. R. Driver, *The Book of Genesis* (London, 1905), 146; E. A. Speiser, *Genesis* (Garden City, NY, 1964) 86; Jacob, *Das erste Buch der Tora: Genesis*, 341; and BDB, 880, who all regard 12:6 as 'hallowed site.'

to Abram,' in 12:7; God is then described later in the verse as *hannir ᵓeh ᵓēlāw*, 'who appeared to him.' In B', in 22:14, Abraham names the place *YHWH yir ᵓeh*, 'Yahweh-yireh,' because *YHWH yêrā ᵓeh*, 'Yahweh appears.'

xv.   B ends with Abram traveling to the Negev and B' ends with Abraham dwelling in its most important city, Beersheba.

xvi.   In B the words of God to Abram occur in two separate parts, in 12:1–3 and 12:7 with action described in the intervening verses. In B' the words of God to Abraham also occur separately, in 22:12 and 22:16–18 with action again described in the intervening verses. The word *wayyō ᵓmer*, 'he (God) said,' occurs before each speech, that is, twice in B and twice in B'. In each case, one speech is the conveyance of the blessing (12:1–3 and 22:16–18), and the other is a specific reference to the patriarch's offspring (*zar ᶜākā*, 'your seed,' in 12:7 and *ᵓet binkā ᵓet yᵉḥîdkā*, 'your son, your favorite,' in 22:12).

It is abundantly clear that the two stories are related. Numerous parallel themes and theme-words serve to connect them, alerting the reader to the literary texture of the Abraham Cycle. The redactor utilized these two episodes in the patriarch's life to mark the beginning and the end of his religious journey.

Attention to the redactional structuring in the Primeval History helped solve a number of thorny issues in biblical scholarship. Recognition of a similar structuring in the Abraham Cycle will likewise clarify some disputes. Many expositors of Genesis assert that 22:15–18 or 15-19 is a secondary addition to the episode describing Abraham's final test. Robert Davidson exemplifies the contention, "These verses are an appendix to the main narrative, somewhat artificially joined to it by claiming that

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Cassuto (*From Noah to Abraham*, 323–24) denies this is intended in 12:6 but admits 'hallowed site' in 22:3–4.

the angel of the LORD spoke to Abraham *a second time* (verse 15)."[15] Von Rad proclaims, "It is clearly noticeable that the narrative once concluded with v. 14."[16]

In light of the redactional structuring in the Abraham Cycle, however, this position is untenable. Since B opens the Abraham Cycle (after the Terah genealogy) with God's blessing to the patriarch, B' must close the Cycle (with only the Nahar genealogy to follow) with the same blessing. We have seen in point viii above that this is exactly the case. They are the most complete blessings of all those conveyed from God to Abraham, speaking of numerical increase, blessing in general, defeat of one's adversaries, and the patriarch as a source of blessing for others. And as mentioned in note 13, these blessings share the literary feature of seven separate expressions. In other words, given the opening blessing in 12:2–3, the closing blessing in 22:17–18 is demanded. Furthermore, in point xvi above it is noted that God speaks twice to Abra(ha)m in B and thus will be expected in B' also.

The expectation of the concluding blessing in the Abraham Cycle is highlighted by the word *šēnît*, 'a second time,' in 22:15. The ten ordeals which Abraham undergoes are the build-up for the climactic blessing at the end of the Cycle. Accordingly, *šēnît* is used in Genesis exactly as in Jonah. Cyrus Gordon has pointed out that the prophet suffers through an ordeal, then the word *šēnît* appears in Jonah 3:1, and then "the fulfillment of his mission follows as the climax. The key to the structure of the Book is the adverb *šēnît*, 'a second time.'"[17] The same holds true for Genesis. Davidson, von Rad, et al. argue that *šēnît* in 22:15 is evidence for the secondary

[15] Davidson, *Genesis 12–50*, 97. See also Driver, *The Book of Genesis*, 220; Morgenstern, *The Book of Genesis*, 152; and J. Skinner, *Genesis* (New York, 1910) 331.

[16] Von Rad, *Genesis*, 237.

[17] C. H. Gordon, "Build-Up and Climax," *Studies in Bible and the Ancient Near East Presented to Samuel E. Loewenstamm* (ed. Y. Avishur and ~~I. Blau, Jerusalem, 1978) 30~~

nature of the verses which follow. On the contrary, as in Jonah, this word is central to the literary composition.[18]

C SARAI IN FOREIGN PALACE; ORDEAL ENDS IN PEACE AND SUCCESS; ABRAM AND LOT PART (12:10–13:18)

C' SARAH IN FOREIGN PALACE; ORDEAL ENDS IN PEACE AND SUCCESS; ABRAHAM AND ISHMAEL PART (20:1–21:34)

The first *lek lᵉkā* episode is followed by the story of Sarai in Pharaoh's palace (12:10–20), an ordeal which ends in peace and success (13:1–4), and is then followed by the story of Abram's and Lot's parting (13:5–18). The second *lek lᵉkā* episode is preceded by a unit comprised of three corresponding pericopes. We have the story of Sarah in Abimelech's palace (20:1–18), the story of Abraham's and Ishmael's parting (21:1–21), and the conclusion of the Abimelech story leading to peace and success (21:22–34).[19]

C and C' are thus divisible into three smaller sections. The foreign palace scenes we will call Ca and C'a, the peace and success scenes Cb and C'b, and the parting scenes Cc and C'c. It should be noted that whereas the order in 12:10–13:18 is Ca, Cb, Cc, the order in 20:1–21:34 is C'a, C'c, C'b. The reason for this arrangement will be discussed below. But first let us proceed to a discussion of the parallel details in each of the three subsections.

In Ca and C'a, which are universally recognized as duplicates, the following theme-words are shared.

i.   In 12:11 we read *wayyōᵓmer ᵓel śāray ᵓištô*, 'he said to Sarai his wife'; and in 20:2 we read *wayyōᵓmer ᵓabrāhām ᵓel śārâ ᵓištô*, 'Abraham said to Sarah his wife.'

[18] Jacob (*Das erste Buch der Tora: Genesis*, 502) correctly understood this.

[19] This is noted not only by Cassuto but by Sarna (*Understanding Genesis*, 161) too.

ii.   Abra(ha)m's fear is voiced in 12:12 $w^e h \bar{a} r^e g \hat{u}$ $^\partial \bar{o} t \hat{\imath}$, 'they will kill me,' and in 20:11 $wah\check{a}r\bar{a}g\hat{u}n\hat{\imath}$, 'they will kill me.'

iii.   The key word $^\partial \bar{a} h \bar{o} t \hat{\imath}$, 'my sister,' occurs in 12:13 and 20:2.

iv.   Sarai/Sarah is referred to in both stories as $h \hat{a}^\partial i \check{s} \check{s} \hat{a}$, 'the woman,' in 12:14–15 and 20:3.

v.   The verbal root lqh, 'take,' occurs in 12:15 and 20:3–4.

vi.   In each episode Abra(ha)m gains $s\bar{o}^\partial n$ $\hat{u}b\bar{a}q\bar{a}r$, 'flocks and herds,' and $^c\bar{a}b\bar{a}d\hat{\imath}m$ $\hat{u}\check{s}^e p\bar{a}h\bar{o}t$, 'male and female slaves,' in 12:16 and 20:14.

vii.   The verbal root ng^c, 'afflict, plague,' is used in 12:17; the same root but with the meaning 'touch' is used in 20:6.

viii.   The words $^c al$ $d^e bar$, 'on account of,' appear in 12:17 and 20:11, 20:18.

ix.   In 12:17 Sarai is called $^\partial \bar{e} \check{s} et$ $^\partial abr\bar{a}m$, 'Abram's wife'; and in 20:18 Sarah is called $^\partial \bar{e} \check{s} et$ $^\partial abr\bar{a}h\bar{a}m$, 'Abraham's wife.'

x.   In 12:18 we read $wayyiqr\bar{a}^\partial$ $par^c\bar{o}h$ $l^e{}^\partial abr\bar{a}m$ $wayy\bar{o}^\partial mer$, 'Pharaoh called to Abram and said'; in 20:9 we have $wayyiqr\bar{a}^\partial$ $^\partial \bar{a}b\hat{\imath}melek$ $l^e{}^\partial abr\bar{a}h\bar{a}m$ $wayy\bar{o}^\partial mer$, 'Abimelech called to Abraham and said.'

xi. $z\bar{o}^\partial t$ $^c\bar{a}\hat{s}\hat{\imath}t\bar{a}$, 'this you did,' appears in 12:18; and $^c\bar{a}\hat{s}\hat{\imath}t\bar{a}$ $z\bar{o}^\partial t$, 'you did this,' occurs in 20:6.

xii.   The return of the patriarch's wife is heralded by the word $w^e{}^c att\hat{a}$, 'now,' in both 12:19 and 20:7.

The connections between Ca and C'a are obvious. In each Abra(ha)m tries to pass his wife off as his sister to save his own neck, Sarai/Sarah winds up in the palace of a foreign king, God intercedes, the wrath of the monarch is incurred, the patriarch's wife is returned, and Abra(ha)m leaves richer than when he entered. As if these parallels were not enough to alert the reader to the relationship between the two stories, the above twelve theme-words are also included.

Neither Cb nor C'b is very long and neither is very central to the patriarchal narratives. But even here there are links which point to their interconnection.

xiii.   In 13:1 Abram heads for the Negev; and in 21:31 we gain an etymology for Beersheba, the region's most important city.

xiv.   Among the patriarch's possessions in 13:2 is $miqneh$, 'livestock' and in 21:27 we read of his $s\bar{o}^\partial n$ $\hat{u}b\bar{a}q\bar{a}r$, 'flocks and herds.'

xv.   Most important of all, in 13:4 we have $wayyiqr\bar{a}^\partial$ $\check{s}\bar{a}m$ $^\partial abr\bar{a}m$ $b^e \check{s} \bar{e} m$ YHWH, 'Abram invoked there the name of Yahweh'; and in 21:33 we have $wayyiqr\bar{a}^\partial$ $\check{s}\bar{a}m$ $b^e \check{s} \bar{e} m$ YHWH, 'he (Abraham) invoked there the name of Yahweh.'

Here it should be noted that regard for redactional structuring alleviates the problem sensed by E. A. Speiser at 21:33. He wrote, "One can only guess at the reason why such a brief excerpt from J was inserted at this particular point."[20] Clearly, Abraham's invoking Yahweh in this verse was needed to balance the same action by the patriarch in 13:4.

The subsections Cc and C'c recount the separation of Abra(ha)m and one of his kinsmen. Again we may note parallels which link the two episodes.

xvi.   Central to Abraham's and Lot's parting is the $r\hat{\imath}b$, 'quarrel,' in 13:7; and a major point of Abraham's and Ishmael's parting is the latter becoming a $r\bar{o}beh$, 'archer,' in 21:20. The words are from different verbal roots, but the assonance is undeniable.

xvii.   In 13:10 we read $wayyi\check{s}\check{s}\bar{a}^\partial$ $l\hat{o}t$ $^\partial et$ $^c \bar{e}n\bar{a}w$ $wayyar^\partial$, 'Lot lifted up his eyes and saw'; and in 21:19 we have $wayyipqah$ $^\partial \check{e}l\bar{o}h\hat{\imath}m$ $^\partial et$ $^c \bar{e}neh\bar{a}$ $watt\bar{e}re^\partial$, 'God opened up her eyes and she saw.'

xviii. The word $mi\operatorname{s}rayim$, 'Egypt,' is cleverly included in 13:10 because it appears in 21:21 too.

xix.   The word $zar^c\check{a}k\bar{a}$, 'your seed,' obtains in both 13:15–16 and 21:13.

xx.   God promises Abram $w^e \hat{s} amt\hat{\imath}$ $^\partial et$ $zar^c\check{a}k\bar{a}$ $ka^c\check{a}par$ $h\bar{a}^\partial\bar{a}re\operatorname{s}$, 'I will make your seed like the dust of the earth,' in 13:16; and he promises Hagar $l^e g\hat{o}y$ $g\bar{a}d\hat{o}l$ $^\partial\check{a}\hat{\imath}menn\hat{u}$, 'I will make him a great nation,' in 21:18.

xxi.   In 13:14–17 the patriarch receives the land of Canaan; in 21:1–7 he receives his son Isaac who is then cir-

[20] Speiser, *Genesis*, 160.

cumcised. The land and Isaac are inextricably inter-twined throughout the patriarchal narratives,[21] and the land and circumcision are specifically collocated at the establishment of the covenant in 17:8–10.

It might be objected that a good portion of C'c is concerned with the birth, circumcision, and weaning of Isaac, happenings which have no apparent parallel in Cc. But the major push in 21:1–7 is not the birth of Isaac as a birth story. In the patriarchal narratives the annunciations, not the births, are the important factor, for they dominate 16:7–14, 18:9–15, 25:21–23. The births themselves receive very little attention, as witness 16:15–16, 21:1–3, 25:24–26. So even as important an event as Isaac's birth need not a priori have as its parallel Ishmael's birth in the redactional structure. As we shall see below, their annunciations are parallel, but not their births. The parallel to Isaac's birth, then, as noted in point xxi above, is Abram's acquisition of Canaan in 13:4–7. Furthermore, Isaac's appearance is used to elicit a conflict which leads to Ishmael's leaving, just as a conflict caused Lot's separation.

Next we must address the question why the order is Ca, Cb, Cc in 12:10–13:18 but C'a, C'c, C'b in 20:1–21:34. Or, in other words, why does the story of Ishmael's and Abraham's separation (21:1–21) precede the verses dealing with Abraham's success which culminates in his invoking Yahweh (21:22–34)? After all, in the corresponding subsections, the story of Lot's and Abram's parting (13:5–18), follows the discourse on Abram's success culminating in his invoking Yahweh (13:1–4). The answer is twofold, and the clues come from the passages just before C'c and just after C'b. The verses immediately preceding 21:1–21 read as follows: "Abraham interceded with God, and God healed Abimelech, that is, his wife and his maidservants, so that they could bear children. For Yahweh had closed fast every womb in Abimelech's household on account of Sarah, Abraham's wife" (20:17–18). The very next verses

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[21] See the acute observations of Sarna (*Understanding Genesis*, 171–72).

tell of Yahweh's taking note of Sarah and how she too bore a child (21:1–2). By placing the story of Ishmael's leaving, which begins with Isaac's birth, before the story of Abraham's success, the compiler achieved a juxtaposition whereby 20:17–18 and 21:1–2 both describe the opening of wombs, both somehow connected with God, Abraham, and Sarah.

Secondly, there is a need for the passage of time between 21:1–21, where Isaac is but a baby, and 22:1–19, where Isaac is grown up. Note that he is able to speak, walk, carry wood, and understand what comprises a sacrifice. By interposing the story of Abraham's success, the redactor neatly accomplished his goal of separating these two events in the life of Isaac. In short, by switching the order of C'c and C'b, the compiler 1) made the two passages dealing with opening the womb contiguous, and 2) allowed for the passage of time between Isaac the infant and Isaac the grown lad.

D ABRAM COMES TO THE RESCUE OF SODOM AND LOT (14:1–24)

D' ABRAHAM COMES TO THE RESCUE OF SODOM AND LOT (18:16–19:38)

Following C and preceding C' are two units which both tell of the patriarch's intervention into the affairs of Sodom leading to the rescue of his nephew Lot. The story lines are undoubtedly analogous, but to drive home this point we are as usual presented with numerous shared theme-words.

i.   The king of Sodom in 14:2 is *bera*ᶜ which, whether or not intended by the author, can be read 'in evil'; the root *r*ᶜ (more properly *r*ᶜᶜ), 'evil,' occurs in 19:7, 19:9, 19:19.

ii.   Similarly, the king of Gomorrah in 14:2 is *birša*ᶜ which, again whether intended or not, can be read 'in wickedness'; the word *rāšā*ᶜ, 'wicked,' occurs in 18:23, 18:25 (bis).

iii.　The place name $ṣō^car$ appears as a gloss in 14:2, 14:8; and we gain an etymology for it in 19:22.

iv.　The word $melaḥ$, 'salt,' is used in both 14:3 and 19:26.

v.　To escape danger the people of the Pentapolis $herâ$ $nāsû$, 'fled to the hills,' in 14:10; and in 19:19–20 we see the same stems used $hāhārâ \ldots lānûs$, 'to the hills . . . to flee.'

vi.　$happālîṭ$, 'the refugee,' is used in 14:13; and the like-sounding, semantically close $himmālēṭ$, 'to escape,' is used in 19:17 (bis), 19:19, 19:22 (see also $^immāl^eṭâ$, 'let me escape,' in 19:20).

vii.　In 14:13 we learn that Abram is in $^ēlōnê mamrē^$; when 18:33 is read with 18:1 we learn that the patriarch is in the same locale in this chapter.

viii.　$hā^cām$, 'the people,' is used to refer to the general Sodomite population in 14:16 and 19:4.

ix.　Melchizedek's name in 14:18 includes the element $ṣedeq$, 'righteousness'; and the same root occurs in $ṣ^edāqâ$, 'righteousness,' in 18:19 and in $ṣaddîq$, 'righteous,' in 18:23–28 (seven times).

x.　In 14:18 we read of a meal comprised of bread and wine; and in 19:3 drink and baked goods are similarly served.

xi.　In 14:19 we have $bārûk ^abrām$, 'blessed be Abram'; and in 18:18 we have $w^enibr^ekû bô$, 'they will be blessed through him (Abraham).'

xii.　God is called $qônēh šāmayim wā^āreṣ$, 'creator of heaven and earth,' in 14:19, 14:22; and his power over these natural forces is rehearsed in 19:23–24 where the sun sets $^cal hā^āreṣ$, 'upon the earth,' and brimstone and fire descend $min haššāmayim$, 'from the heavens.'

xiii.　Abram gives $ma^cáśēr$, 'one-tenth,' to Melchizedek in 14:20; and the negotiations with God end at $^cáśārâ$, 'ten (men),' in 18:32.

Again we are able to solve a literary critical problem by paying heed to the redactional structure in the Abraham Cycle. Some scholars[22] have been plagued by the appearance of $min haššāmayim$, 'from the heavens,' in 19:24, for it seems unnecessary and clumsy. But it is specifically

[22] Skinner, *Genesis*, 309; *BHS*, ad loc.; and *NAB*, ad loc.

placed near $hā^āreṣ$, 'the earth,' in 19:23, to evoke the epithet $qônēh šāmayim wā^āreṣ$, 'creator of heaven and earth,' in 14:19, 14:22, as noted above in point xii. Without the references to heaven in 19:24 the balance would be incomplete. Moreover, it is specifically Yahweh who is present in 19:23–24, just as he is included in 14:22.

E COVENANT WITH ABRAM; ANNUNCIATION OF ISHMAEL (15:1–16:16)
E' COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM; ANNUNCIATION OF ISAAC (17:1–18:15)

Standing at the center of the Abraham Cycle are two parallel units describing the covenant established between God and the patriarch and the annunciation of a son in fulfillment of that covenant. As with C and C', these two units can be neatly divided into subsections. The covenant portions, 15:1–21 and 17:1–27, we will label Ea and E'a;[23] and the annunciation scenes, 16:1–16 and 18:1–15, we will label Eb and E'b. The corresponding subsections will be compared separately, beginning with the two covenant chapters.

Scholars are quick to point out the differences between the two covenant narrations,[24] but as the following will attempt to demonstrate, in actuality they are related more closely than usually is admitted. Not only are several theme-words shared by the two chapters, but more importantly the exact order of action, ideas, and motifs is followed in Ea and E'a.

i.　Each scene begins with God's appearance to Abra-(ha)m, one using the noun $maḥázeh$, 'vision,' in 15:1, the other the verb $wayyērā^$, 'appeared,' in 17:1.

ii.　In each scene, God begins his speech to Abra(ha)m with mention of divine protection; in 15:1 we have

[23] For an attempt at seeing 17:1–27 itself as having been composed along chiastic lines, see S. E. McEvenue, *The Narrative Style of the Priestly Writer* (Rome, 1971) 157–58.

[24] Von Rad, *Genesis*, 192–93; and Speiser, *Genesis*, 126.

ānōkî māgēn lāk, 'I am your shield'; and in 17:1 we have hithallēk lᵉpānay, 'walk before me.' That the latter expression connotes divine protection may be determined from Ps 116:8–9.[25]

iii. Next God progresses to speak of reward and increase; 15:1 uses śᵉkārkā harbēh mᵉʾōd, 'your reward will be very great'; and 17:2 states wᵉʾarbeh ʾōtkā bimʾōd mᵉʾōd, 'I will make you exceedingly great.'

iv. In 15:3 Abram complains he is not a father hēn lî lōʾ nātattā zāraᶜ, 'but you have given me no offspring'; and in 17:4 a perfect corollary appears wᵉhāyîtā lᵉʾab hămôn gôyîm, 'you will be the father of a multitude of nations.'

v. E goes on to speak of many offspring in 15:4–5, with the specific use of yēṣēʾ mimmēᶜekā, 'will issue from your loins'; similarly E' promises many offspring in 17:6, and specifically uses mimmᵉkā yēṣēʾû, 'from you will issue.'

vi. Next the land of Canaan is promised as an inheritance, in 15:7 and 17:8.

vii. Each pericope then proceeds to the description of a ceremony; in 15:9–11 it is the peculiar animals ritual and in 17:10–14 it is the circumcision ritual.

viii. In 15:13 a second communication from God to Abram commences with wayyōʾmer lᵉʾabrām, 'he said to Abram'; and in 17:15 God also begins a second speech to the patriarch with wayyōʾmer ʾĕlōhîm ʾel ʾabrāhām, 'God said to Abraham.'

ix. This second communication deals further with the promised offspring, in both 15:13–16 and 17:15–22.

x. The two episodes close with the completion of the ceremony described earlier, marked by bên haggᵉzārîm, 'between the pieces,' in 15:17 and the verb mwl, 'circumcise,' in 17:23–27.

There are naturally differences between the two covenants, in the names of the deity, the names of the patriarch, the rituals utilized, etc. And if one wanted to emphasize these differences, one could easily set up major distinctions between the two chapters. But as the above

[25] As astutely noted by Davidson, *Genesis 12–50*, 57; see also Jacob, *Das erste Buch der Tora: Genesis*, 419.

has shown, it is just as easy to show the striking similarities between them. With the possible exception of B and B', no two episodes in the Abraham Cycle are as parallel as Ea and E'a. For in these two we have not only similar use of language, but perfectly parallel sequences of thought, speech, and action.[26] Within the Abraham Cycle, therefore, the paired units with the most affinities for each other are the start and climax of the patriarch's spiritual odyssey and the two covenants. This may be by design, for these episodes are by far the most important within the collection of stories which comprise the Cycle.

It is apposite to quote Gerhard von Rad on these sections. Concerning 15:1–21 he states a "certain characteristic is that the 'chief joint' in a text filled with joints occurs between v.6 and v.7" and that "there are too many contradictions in this chapter for one to think of it as an organic narrative unit."[27] Regarding 17:1–27 he writes that "it does not have a unified structure and continuity. A series of seams can be recognized, from which one concludes a successive combination of various Priestly traditions about the covenant with Abraham into a large unit."[28] This is not the point to enter into a detailed discussion of source criticism (see below chap. VI), but it should be noted here that von Rad's comments do not stand up to the findings of redactional structuring. If we had only 15:1–21 before us, we might agree that the chapter is a composite one, "filled with joints." Likewise if we possessed only 17:1–27 we might conclude that various traditions have been fused into one chapter. But the two covenant stories together seem to contravene von Rad's analysis.

For example, he saw a "chief joint" between 15:6, which ends a discussion of Abram's descendants, and 15:7, which grants the patriarch the land of Canaan. But

[26] Davidson (*Genesis 12–50*, 54–56) is one commentator who is partly aware of this.

[27] Von Rad, *Genesis*, 177.

[28] Von Rad, *Genesis*, 192.

in the corresponding unit, 17:7–8 inextricably links the descendants and the land, as von Rad readily admits.[29] If we see the two covenant stories as matching sequences, it cannot follow that 15:6 and 15:7 are to be separated. Descendants and land go hand-in-hand in E'a and accordingly are inseparable in Ea.

We may cite another example. Von Rad posits that 15:13–16 is an intrusion into Ea, separating the ceremony which is described in 15:9–12 and completed in 15:17,[30] and that 17:15–22 similarly interrupts 17:10–14, 17:23–27 which discusses the circumcision.[31] But it seems rather odd that this would have happened independently in both covenant accounts. The fact that 15:13–16 and 17:15–22 both contain a second divine communication to Abra-(ha)m concerning his promised offspring militates against von Rad's contention. We should rather see in Ea and E'a a master at work who has gracefully produced, to use von Rad's words, "a unified structure and continuity."

The two covenant chapters are both followed by annunciation scenes, Eb and E'b. They continue the same order established in Ea and E'a.

xi.   Both episodes do not move directly to annunciation, rather 16:1–6 and 18:1–8 each set the scene for the pronouncement of conception and each is characterized by a high percentage of dialogue.

xii.   Only then do the actual annunciations follow, in 16:7–16 and 18:9–16.

Furthermore, two important theme-words appear in each section.

xiii.   The verbal root $šm^c$, 'hear,' in 16:11 is central to Eb; and it is important to E'b also, in 18:10.

xiv.   The annunciation in Eb closes with four uses of the root $r^ʾh$, 'see,' in 16:13–14; and this is echoed at the

[29] Von Rad, *Genesis*, 195.
[30] Von Rad, *Genesis*, 182; see also Skinner (*Genesis*, 282) who claims that these verses "are obviously out of place."
[31] Von Rad, *Genesis*, 197–98.

end of E'b with $yārē^ʾâ$, 'was afraid.' Although from different roots, these words, one dealing with Hagar and God and one dealing with Sarah and God, are assonant and accordingly link the stories.

Above it was noted that Isaac's birth in 21:1–7 in C'c is not parallel to Ishmael's birth in Cc. Obviously the corollary is also true. Ishmael's birth is recorded in 16:15–16 in Eb but if finds no corresponding announcement of Isaac's birth in E'b. The reason for this has already been stated: to the Hebrews, the births of the heroes were secondary to their annunciations. This is equally true of Ugaritic epic, where the events leading to the births of Danel's and Kret's children receive much more attention than the births themselves. Accordingly, in the Abraham Cycle the annunciations of Hagar and Sarah prompting the births of Ishmael and Isaac are parallel, but the births themselves are not.

THE TWO CONTROLS

The structure posited by Cassuto over thirty years ago has stood up to detailed examination. We can reaffirm his general conclusion that "all this shows clearly how out of the material selected from the store of ancient tradition concerning Abraham a homogeneous narrative was created in the text before us, integrated and harmoniously arranged in all its parts and details."[32] The general view that "the crude and disjointed tales of the Patriarchs" are unpolished and unsophisticated[33] is simply inaccurate. The compiler has artfully created a palistrophe[34] at which we can marvel. But we do not have to stop here.

[32] Cassuto, *From Noah to Abraham*, 297.
[33] See D. B. Redford, *A Study of the Biblical Story of Joseph* (Leiden, 1970) 1.
[34] This term seems to have been invented by McEvenue (*The Narrative Style of the Priestly Writer*, 29, n 18) and has since been borrowed by other writers. McEvenue describes it thus: "The figure is experienced as a thought which stretches outward over a certain series of elements

The redactor has set up his ten units—or with the subsections in C and C' and E and E' we may more properly speak of sixteen units—in more than just a chiastic parallelism. He introduced two new onomastic entries at the pivot point of the narrative. This pivot, at which the episodes of 11:27–16:16 are then repeated in reverse order in 17:1–22:24, is 17:1–5. Here all the important aspects of Abraham's life come together. He is 99 years old, his age at Sarah's conception of Isaac. God appears to him as El Shaddai, the distinctively patriarchal divine name (see Exod 6:3). Abraham walks with God at this point. And the covenant is established.

In the next verses we encounter two new names. Here Elohim is introduced for the first time. Up to this point, only Yahweh has been used (along with two El names in 14:20, 14:22, 16:13). Henceforth Yahweh will alternate with Elohim (along with one El name in 21:33). We gain the impression that Abraham's religious journey was not complete in 11:27–16:16. It is as if Hebrew theology is unfulfilled without Yahweh *and* Elohim, as *one* god. Moreover, just as the divine partner in the covenant gains a new name at this juncture, so does the human partner. Henceforth the patriarch will be known as Abraham. In A through E he is called Abram, in E' through A' he is Abraham.[35]

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and then retraces its steps over the same elements. It can be merely a mannerism. But it can also be an effective figure if the repeated elements are key words, and if the thought continues to develop in such a way that a tension or contrast is felt between the first and second occurrence of each element, and between the ideas which are made to correspond in this way."

[35] This point has been reached quite independently by J. M. Sasson, "The Biographic Mode in Hebrew Historiography," in *In the Shelter of Elyon: Essays on Ancient Palestinian Life and Literature in Honor of G. W. Ahlström* (ed. W. B. Barrick and J. R. Spencer; Sheffield, 1984) 307: "This particular series of scenes is complicated by the fact that the collection is, for theological reasons, allocated to materials concerning Abram and to those concerning Abraham."

I refer to the two names introduced at the pivot point as controls, for they indicate that the redactional structuring posited for the Abraham Cycle is a well-pondered design. If one is not convinced by the large number of themes and theme-words common to the parallel story lines in the inverse sequences of 11:27–16:16 and 17:1–22:24, then these controls should dispel any doubt. The first of these controls, the use of the divine names Yahweh and Elohim, is unquestionably the central factor in Pentateuchal source criticism. Accordingly, any conclusions which might be drawn from the use of the two theophores in the Abraham Cycle relevant to source analysis, is a topic which will be taken up later in some detail (see below, chap. VI).

CATCHWORDS

In chap. I we saw that key vocabulary items are used in the Primeval History not only to link parallel units but to link successive units as well. This is also the case, indeed even more so, in the Abraham Cycle. This literary technique is so prevalent it is perhaps best to list these catchwords and phrases.

A is a very short unit but it nevertheless contains two items which anticipate B:

i.   *môladt-*, 'homeland,' occurs in 11:28 and 12:1.
ii.   *ʾarṣā kᵉnaᶜan*, 'to the land of Canaan,' appears in 11:31 and 12:5 (bis).

Numerous catchwords and phrases link section B to section C:

i.   *wᵉhakkᵉnaᶜānî ʾaz bāʾāreṣ*, 'the Canaanite was then in the land,' occurs in 12:6; and *wᵉhakkᵉnaᶜānî wᵉhappᵉrizzî ʾaz yôšēb bāʾāreṣ*, 'the Canaanite and Perizzite then dwelled in the land,' occurs in 13:7.
ii.   The giving of the land *lᵉzarᶜākā*, 'to your seed,' occurs in 12:7 and 13:15.
iii. *miqqedem*, 'eastward,' occurs in 12:8 and 13:11.

iv.   *wayyiben šām mizbēaḥ laYHWH*, 'he built there an altar to Yahweh,' occurs in 12:8 and 13:18.

v.   Bethel and Ai are prominent in 12:8 and 13:3.[36]

vi.   Abram calls *bᵉšēm YHWH*, 'on the name of Yahweh,' in 12:8 and 13:4.

vii.   The roots *hlk* and *nsᶜ*, 'go' and 'travel,' are used in 12:9 and 13:2.

viii.   *hannegbā*, 'to the Negev,' appears in 12:9 and 13:1.

Two nexuses bridge C and D:

i.   *ṣōᶜar*, 'Zoar,' occurs in 13:10 and 14:2, 14:8.

ii.   Lot's dwelling in Sodom appears in 13:12 and 14:12.

No two units in the Abraham Cycle are as dissimilar as D and E. In the former the patriarch is the military chieftain and in the latter he is the covenant partner of God. Nonetheless, as Sarna has pointed out,[37] the compiler used a number of words to link the episodes:

i.   *miggēn*, 'delivered,' appears in 14:20, and *māgēn*, 'shield,' is used in 15:1.

ii.   *rᵉkūš*, 'property, wealth, substance,' occurs in 14:21 and 15:14.

iii.   Damascus is worked into the stories in 14:15 and 15:2.

iv.   *bᵉrît*, 'alliance, covenant,' appears in 14:13 and 15:18.

v.   *hā ʾᵉmôrî*, 'the Amorite,' occurs twice in each unit, in 14:7, 14:13, and 15:10, 15:21.

Other connections not mentioned by Sarna are as follows:

vi.   *rᵉpāʾîm*, 'Rephaim,' occurs in 14:5 and 15:20.

vii.   *dān*, 'Dan, judge,' appears in 14:14 and 15:14.

viii.   *ṣedeq*, 'Zedek,' occurs in 14:18, and *ṣᵉdāqâ*, 'righteousness,' is used in 15:6.

ix.   *šālēm*, 'Salem, complete,' is used in 14:18 and 15:16.

[36] This and the next three examples were noted by Cassuto, *From Noah to Abraham*, 364. Doubtless many more of these would have been mentioned by him had he lived to complete his commentary on Genesis.

[37] Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, 121–22.

E and E' are not only successive but parallel so they share many features, as shown in the discussion about their correspondence. But it is specifically the subsections Eb and E'a which are contiguous, so it is noteworthy that they too have catchwords and phrases linking them:

i.   *ʾarbeh*, 'I will multiply,' is used in 16:10 and 17:2.

ii.   The root *šmᶜ*, 'hear,' is predicated of God in 16:11 and 17:20.

iii.   Ishmael dominates 16:11–16 and appears in 17:20 too.

iv.   We are given Abra(ha)m's age, obviously in similar wording, in 16:16 and 17:1.

E' is linked to the following D' through these nexuses:

i.   *petaḥ*, 'entrance,' occurs in 18:1 as Abraham greets his visitors, and *happethâ*, 'at the entrance,' is used in 19:6 as Lot greets his visitors.

ii.   The same root occurs in *niṣṣābîm*, 'standing,' in 18:2 and *nᵉṣîb*, 'pillar,' in 18:26.

iii.   *wayyištaḥû (ʾappayim) ʾārṣâ*, 'he prostrated (his face) earthward,' appears in 18:2 and 19:1.

iv.   Abraham's hospitality in 18:3–8 is echoed by Lot's hospitality in 19:2–3.

v.   A paranomasia of sort is achieved by the roots *ṣḥq*, 'laugh,' in 18:12–15, and *ṣᶜq/zᶜq*, 'cry' in 18:20–21.

The following catchwords bridge D' and C':

i.   *gôy gādôl*, 'a great nation,' appears in 18:18 and 21:18.

ii.   *qûm qaḥ*, 'get up, take,' occurs in 19:15, and *qûmî šᵉʾî*, 'get up, take,' occurs in 21:18.

iii.   The Hiphᶜil of *ḥzq*, 'seize, take hold,' is used in 19:16 and 21:18.

iv.   The Hiphᶜil of *šqh*, 'give drink,' is used in 19:32–35 and 21:19.

v.   The root *hrh*, 'conceive,' occurs in 19:36 and 21:2.

Two nexuses link C' and B':

i.   *wayyiqqaḥ ʾabrāhām*, 'Abraham took,' appears in 21:27 and 22:6.

ii.   Beersheba occurs in 21:33 and 22:19.

Finally, even A', the most loosely connected unit of the Abraham Cycle, has a link with the preceding B', as noted by Jacob:[38]

i.   *wayᵉhî ʾaḥar/ʾaḥărê haddᵉbārîm hāʾelleh*, 'after these things,' commences both units, in 22:1 and 22:20.

This large number of catchwords has been utilized by the redactor to further correlate the stories which comprise the Abraham Cycle into a unified whole. Any one of these examples could be a coincidence, this is true. But taken collectively, the cumulative weight of the data permits us to conclude that we have here a deliberate attempt by an ancient Israelite genius to tighten the web he has woven.

THE END OF THE ABRAHAM CYCLE

In the schema proposed by Cassuto and adopted herein with some modifications, the Abraham Cycle ends with chap. 22.[39] Obviously there is more material about the patriarch's life, but it is not central to his spiritual odyssey. As Sarna has written, "With the climax of his career now behind him, Abraham's subsequent acts are concerned with winding up his affairs."[40] This material, which comprises 23:1–25:18, may be divided into five units: A. Death and burial of Sarah (23:1–20), B. Marriage of Isaac (24:1–67), C. Abraham's sons (25:1–6), D. Death and burial of Abraham (25:7–11), E. Ishmael's sons (25:12–18).

If one looks at the entire redactional process of Genesis, one realizes that these units do not constitute a cycle unto itself. Rather, they are used to link the second major

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[38] Jacob, *Das erste Buch der Tora: Genesis*, 504.

[39] This view is expressed by others as well. Von Rad, *Genesis*, 241, states: "The narrative about Abraham's sacrifice was the climax . . . and the end of the Abraham narratives." Davidson (*Genesis 12–50*, 98) states: "This narrative (chapter 22) marks the end of Abraham's spiritual experience."

[40] Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, 166.

cycle of the book, that of Abraham, with the third cycle, that of Jacob.[41] Moreover, as we shall see in chap. IV, these units are paralleled by the material which connects the Jacob Cycle with the last portion of Genesis, the Joseph Cycle. Accordingly, a detailed analysis of 23:1–25:18 will be discussed later.

It is noteworthy that 23:1–25:18 is exactly the same as Parshat Ḥayye Sarah in the rabbinic division of the Torah for the Jewish annual reading cycle. In other words, the rabbis sensed that these units were not primary to the life of Abraham which they saw as the portions Lek Leka and Wayyera. In chap. I we saw that the pivot point of the Primeval Cycle accords with the rabbinic division of Genesis into the portions Bereshit and Noah Consequently, we can conclude that behind the traditional Jewish apportionment of the text is a thought process not too inconsistent with the findings of modern biblical scholarship. Of course, we would not want to carry this argument too far. Whereas Parshat Noah ends at 11:32, I see the Primeval History ending at 11:26 (only a slight difference); and though Lek Leka and Wayyera divide the Abraham Cycle at 18:1, I see the pivot point at 17:1 (a more significant difference).[42]

OVERVIEW

In the past most scholars have viewed the Abraham narratives as a loose collection of stories brought together in a more or less haphazard or ad hoc fashion. Cassuto

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[41] Concerning chap. 24, for example, Morgenstern (*The Book of Genesis*, 191) writes: "The story of Isaac's obtaining his cousin Rebekah, artistic and spiritual though it is, is nevertheless in itself an independent incident of the Abraham cycle of stories, without which the unity of the Abraham story would nevertheless have been complete. It is merely the connecting link between the Abraham cycle and the Jacob cycle. . . ."

[42] In the triennial reading cycle, there are much shorter pericopes and thus we will expect even more accord with the plan laid out in this book. The triennial system adduced by A. Buechler and others is

proposed a chiastic parallelism for the episodes in 12:1–22:19. Since this material is bounded by two genealogical bookends, I have expanded the Abraham Cycle to include all of 11:27-22:24. Within these chapters we may note 1) five units in 11:27–16:16 which are then duplicated by five units in reverse order in 17:1–22:24; 2) a large series of theme-words and parallel expressions and ideas which link the matching units; 3) the focal point of the Abraham Cycle at 17:1–5; 4) two controls, the introduction of the divine element Elohim and the patriarch's name change from Abram to Abraham, which point to the correctness of our proposed structure; and 5) catchwords and phrases which link successive units. The presence of these devices in the narrative betokens a well-conceived blueprint expertly executed by the individual responsible for bringing together the various traditions surrounding Israel's first patriarch. In keeping with the terminology adopted in this book, we may label this the redactional structuring of the Abraham Cycle.

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conveniently presented in *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 15 (1971) cols. 1387–88. There it is noted that a division occurs at 17:1, our focal point in the Abraham Cycle.

III

THE JACOB CYCLE

The stories which commence with Jacob's birth in 25:19–26 and conclude with Benjamin's birth in 35:16–22 are generally recognized to be an integrated narrative complex.[1] In 1975, Michael Fishbane advanced our understanding of these chapters by demonstrating most conclusively that the stories of the Jacob Cycle are aligned in perfectly symmetrical fashion.[2] In other words, redactional structuring may be detected not only in the Primeval History and the Abraham Cycle but in the third major division of Genesis as well. The structure of the Jacob Cycle as outlined below is essentially that of Fishbane's, though I have made one slight adjustment.[3]

A   Oracle sought, struggle in childbirth, Jacob born (25:19–34)
B   Interlude: Rebekah in foreign palace, pact with foreigners (26:1–34)
C   Jacob fears Esau and flees (27:1–28:9)
D   Messengers (28:10–22)
E   Arrival at Haran (29:1–30)

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[1] G. von Rad, *Genesis* (Philadelphia, 1961) 258; and J. Morgenstern, *The Book of Genesis* (New York, 1965) 184–205.
[2] M. Fishbane, "Composition and Structure in the Jacob Cycle (Gen. 25:19–35:22)," *JJS* 26 (1975) 15–38. A slightly altered version of this article appears as chap. 3 in M. Fishbane, *Text and Texture* (New York, 1979) 40–62.
[3] What Fishbane calls F, I divide into F and F'. In "Composition and Structure," 32, and *Text and Texture*, 56–57, he recognizes that two units are present but does not label them as such. Also, Fishbane considers 29:31–35 part of E whereas I attach it to F.