

THE REDACTION OF GENESIS

by

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Dedicated to Cyrus H. Gordon



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ABBREVIATIONS

BDB	F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, <i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> (Oxford, 1906)
BHS	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> (Stuttgart, 1977)
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
EJ	<i>Encyclopaedia Judaica</i>
IEJ	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
JANESCU	<i>Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JJS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
JQR	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
LB	<i>Linguistica Biblica</i>
NAB	<i>New American Bible</i> (New York, 1970)
NJPSV	<i>The Torah</i> (Philadelphia, 1962) = New Jewish Publication Society Version
OMRO	<i>Oudheidkundige Mededeelingen uit het Rijksmuseum van Oudheden te Leiden</i>
OTS	<i>Oudtestamentische Studien</i>
SAK	<i>Studien zur altägyptischen Kultur</i>
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	<i>Vetus Testamentum, Supplements</i>
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

PREFACE

The present volume is a slender one, and not wholly original. It borrows greatly, as much of scholarship does, from previous work in the same field. In the case of the subject at hand, work by Umberto Cassuto, Nahum M. Sarna, Michael Fishbane, and Jack M. Sasson have paved the way for my own research. Not only am I greatly indebted to these individuals' writings, but I take this opportunity to thank Professors Sarna, Fishbane, and Sasson for their communications on the subject and for their encouragement.

The knowledgeable reader will realize that four of us who have contributed to this area of research are all students of the same man, Cyrus H. Gordon, and that the fifth was a close associate in the fields of Ugaritic and Biblical studies. Accordingly, it is a fitting tribute to dedicate this book to Professor Gordon. Furthermore, I have been aided by Dr. Gordon in various ways in recent years, and for this I am particularly grateful.

M. O'Connor read the manuscript of this book and made many insightful comments. His astute observations caused me to rethink several points, and those which have been incorporated have improved my work greatly. For the time and effort he put into this task, I am most thankful.

My typist, Lynne Glair, who knows no Hebrew and for whom Hebrew transliteration is most peculiar, produced an outstanding manuscript. This difficult task, encumbered by an abnormally large percentage of Hebrew words, was carried out most efficiently and always cheerfully. Her successor, Veronica Caldwell, was of assistance in the final stages of the book's preparation.

My friend, Dr. Gerald Berkowitz, performed the yeoman task of reading the volume in galley-proof; to him I offer my sincere thanks.

I am also indebted to two individuals at Canisius College, Rev. Benjamin Fiore, S.J., chairman of the Department of Religious Studies, and Dr. Walter G. Sharrow, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, for decreasing my teaching load during the Fall 1982 semester and thus enabling me to write the better part of this volume. Fr. Fiore receives additional thanks for his assistance in the preparation of the Egyptian hieroglyphs adorning the dedication page.

Finally, as always, I express my love to Susan, whose love, devotion, and sacrifice know no bounds and are never ceasing.

INTRODUCTION

No book has attracted the attention of modern biblical scholarship more than Genesis. Its myths and legends, stories and genealogies, prose and poetry, have been fertile ground for many approaches: comparative, historical, archaeological, text-critical, source-critical, etc. But with the exception of the general conclusion that Genesis may be divided into four great cycles devoted to Primeval History, Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph,¹ literary criticism has been less productive. There have been occasional voices raised to show how attention to literary details reveals the artistry of the authors, but the literary approach to the Bible in general and to Genesis in particular has not been popular.

In recent years, the trend has shifted, and literary criticism is now recognized as its own discipline within the greater purview of biblical studies. Much of this work has been directed at Genesis, which is the biblical book best represented in such works as Robert Alter's *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, Michael Fishbane's *Text and Texture*, and the two volumes edited by K. R. R. Gros Louis entitled *Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives*, and is the sole

¹ See, e.g., E. A. Speiser, *Genesis* (Garden City, NY, 1964) liii-lx. G. W. Coats (*Genesis* [Grand Rapids, MI, 1983] 14, 16, 28-29, etc.) prefers to call the third cycle after Isaac (in accordance with Genesis' own wording at 25:19) and the fourth cycle after Jacob (see 37:2). Coats's book appeared after the bulk of the present volume was written; accordingly I have been unable to incorporate its ideas into my research.