SEEKING A HOMELAND

SOJOURN AND ETHNIC IDENTITY
IN THE ANCESTRAL NARRATIVES OF GENESIS

BY

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ABSTRACT

Sojourn is a *Leitwort* (leading word) in the ancestral narratives of Genesis, appearing 17 times in its various forms: verbal, גור√ *gûr*; and nominal, גֵּר *gēr* and מָגוֹר *māgôr*. Sojourn is an indicator of alienation and estrangement from land and community, yet it is repeatedly accentuated as an important descriptor of the patriarchs' identity and experience. What accounts for this counter-intuitive emphasis? This thesis makes the case that the narrative development of sojourn in Genesis contributes to a strong communal identity for biblical Israel. Detailed exegetical analysis of the texts shows sojourn to strengthen biblical Israel's ethnic identity in ways that are varied and at times paradoxical. Its very complexity, however, makes it particularly useful as a resource for group identity at times when straightforward categories of territorial and social affiliation fail.

This study draws upon the sociological theory of Anthony D. Smith to structure its investigation of sojourn as a contributor to ethnic identity. Smith's understanding of ethnic myth emphasizes the central functions of an ethnoscape (a symbolically significant geography) and a myth of election (an account of chosenness) in constructing communal identity. Ethnic myth uses the history of a communal past, constructed around these dual elements, to create a vision with directive capacity for the future of the *ethnie*; that is, to shape the ethics of the community. Smith's categories of ethnoscape, election, and ethics provide analytical tools that reveal a distinctive role for sojourn in strengthening Israel's ethnic myth.

The Genesis sojourn texts are divided into three groups according to literary form: itinerary notices, promise speeches, and narrative dialogues. The tri-part division corresponds with a focus upon each of Smith's three categories above, respectively. Close readings of each text in its narrative context result in an overall portrait of sojourn as a significant contributor to the strength and durability of Israel's ethnic identity.

SIGNED DECLARATION

I, Elisabeth Robertson Kennedy, hereby declare that I have written this thesis and that the work it contains is entirely my own. I furthermore declare that this thesis has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Signed _____

Date _____

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
AnBib	Analecta biblica
BA	*Biblical Archaeologist*
BASOR	*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
Bib	*Biblica*
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament
BR	*Biblical Research*
BT	*Bible Translator*
BTB	*Biblical Theology Bulletin*
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBC	Cambridge Bible Commentary
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
ExpTim	*Expository Times*
FOTL	Forms of the Old Testament Literature
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
GOTR	*Greek Orthodox Theological Review*
HAL	*Hebräisches und aramäisches Lexicon zum Alten Testament*, ed. Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, and J.J. Stamm
HALOT	*The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, ed. Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, and J.J. Stamm
HBT	*Horizons in Biblical Theology*
HS	*Hebrew Studies*
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
IBC	Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching
ICC	International Critical Commentary
ITC	International Theological Commentary
JAAR	*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*
JANES	*Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JBR	*Journal of Bible and Religion*
JJS	*Journal of Jewish Studies*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JTSA	*Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*
LTQ	*Lexington Theological Quarterly*
NIB	*New Interpreter's Bible*
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIDOTTE	*New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren

OBT	Overtures to Biblical Theology
OTG	Old Testament Guides
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTS	Old Testament Studies
OtSt	Oudtestamentische Studiën
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLSCS	Society of Biblical Literature Septuagint and Cognate Studies
SBLStBl	Society of Biblical Literature Studies in Biblical Literature
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SemeiaSt	Semeia Studies
ST	*Studia Theologica*
SubBi	Subsidia Biblica
TDNT	*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrick and Geoffrey W. Bromiley
TDOT	*Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren
THAT	*Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann
ThWAT	*Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren
TLOT	*Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
TynBul	*Tyndale Bulletin*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	Vetus Testamentum, Supplements
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WC	Westminster Commentaries
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WTJ	*Westminster Theological Journal*
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*

INTRODUCTION

All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland.

Hebrews 11:13-14 (NRSV)

The author of Hebrews describes the heroes of the book of Genesis as sojourners in the land of promise.[1] Christian tradition looks to the sojourn of the patriarchs as exemplary; the author of Hebrews depicts their alien existence in Canaan as a faith stance for believers to imitate. This New Testament writer is not the first to invoke a lesson from ancestral sojourn. In the Hebrew Bible, 1 Chron. 29:15 and Psa. 39:13 reference the sojourn of the fathers as a pattern repeated through time,[2] and several motive clauses attached to laws about treatment of the alien urge the remembrance of past sojourn in Egypt.[3]

These references to past sojourn as a model for the present (in addition to a number of texts mentioning patriarchal sojourn for other reasons[4]) suggest a significance for patriarchal sojourn in the biblical tradition. Turning the spotlight on the book of Genesis itself reveals a textual emphasis on sojourn that confirms the impression gleaned from the allusions throughout the canon. Sojourn appears 17 times in the patriarchal narratives of Genesis, nine times in its verbal form (√גור),

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[1] The Greek verb παροικέω ("to sojourn") in Heb. 11:9 is used in the LXX to translate the Hebrew verb for sojourn, √גור, every time it appears in Genesis.

[2] F.A. Spina maintains that the designation "fathers" in these texts most likely indicates the patriarchal ancestors; D.J. Estes and J.E. Ramírez Kidd argue for a broader interpretation encompassing the patriarchs and subsequent generations together. Frank Anthony Spina, "Israelites as *gērîm*, 'Sojourners,' in Social and Historical Context," in *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Carol L. Meyers and M. O'Connor (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 321; Daniel J. Estes, "Metaphorical Sojourning in 1 Chronicles 29:15," *CBQ* 53, no. 1 (1991): 48; José E. Ramírez Kidd, *Alterity and Identity in Israel: The גר in the Old Testament*, BZAW 283 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1999), 107.

[3] Exod. 22:20; 23:9; Lev. 19:34; Deut. 10:19; 23:8. These texts may refer to the sojourn experience of the exodus generation, but some authors have argued that it refers to the experience of earlier generations starting with Jacob and his sons. See Ramírez Kidd, 90-98; Sung-Jae Kim, "The *ger* and the Identity of Ancient Israel: Socio-literary Analysis and Deconstructive Interpretation" (ThD dissertation, Graduate Theological Union, 1996), 423.

[4] Exod. 6:4; 1 Chron. 16:19; Psa. 105:12 refer to patriarchal sojourn in Canaan; Deut. 26:5; Psa. 105:23; Isa. 52:4 refer to patriarchal sojourn in Egypt. In the New Testament, Acts 7:6 and Acts 13:17 refer to sojourn in Egypt; the first text quotes Gen. 15:13.

and eight times in its nominal form (גֵר or מָגוֹר).[5] Sojourn is associated with each of the stories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, and with all the major geographical settings of the narrative—Canaan, Egypt, and Paddan-aram. It is often situated in high-visibility positions at the start, climax, or close of stories. It occurs in a variety of literary forms, ranging from narrative reports to dialogue between characters. It appears several times in the divine promises, and is intimately related to this central theme of Genesis. The relatively high frequency and even distribution of its occurrence, together with its connection to primary themes, settings, and characters of the narrative, qualify sojourn for classification as a *Leitwort*,[6] or "leading word"— a word or root that is meaningfully repeated within a literary work, directing attention to its chief themes.[7] As an important literary element in the Genesis narrative, sojourn commands interpretive attention.

The accent on sojourn in Genesis is, however, somewhat surprising. In a narrative concerned with instituting a strong tie between the ancestors of Israel and their divinely appointed homeland, sojourn sounds a note of discord. Recurring emphasis on sojourn *within* Canaan suggests alienation from the land that is supposed to be Israel's home. In addition, repeated periods of sojourn *outside* Canaan, as the patriarchs are depicted departing from it again and again, describe a reality of distance and estrangement from the territory where their destiny is projected to unfold. Sojourn seems a jarring and troubling counter-note to the establishment of an ancestral claim in Canaan. R. Feldmeier has found that patriarchal sojourn was sufficiently disquieting to occasion Jewish suppression and emendation of the texts during some eras.[8] Sojourn does not square easily with a strong bond to the promised land; the logic of its recurrence in Genesis is not readily apparent.

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[5] √גור: 12:10; 19:9; 20:1; 21:23, 34; 26:3; 32:5; 35:27; 47:4. גֵר: 15:13; 23:4. מָגוֹר: 17:8; 28:4; 36:7; 37:1; 47:9 (x2).

[6] M. Buber first coined this term. Martin Buber, "Leitwortstil in der Erzählung des Pentateuchs," in *Die Schrift und ihre Verdeutschung*, ed. Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig (Berlin: Schocken, 1936), 211-238 (ET Martin Buber, "*Leitwort* Style in Pentateuch Narrative," in *Scripture and Translation*, ed. Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig, Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994], 114-128).

[7] For definitions (all closely overlapping), see Buber, "Leitwortstil," 211-12 (ET, 114); Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 95; Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible* (London: T. & T. Clark International, 1989), 212; Yairah Amit, "The Multi-Purpose 'Leading Word' and the Problems of its Usage," *Prooftexts* 9, no. 2 (1989): 109.

[8] Reinhard Feldmeier, "The 'Nation' of Strangers: Social Contempt and Its Theological Interpretations in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity," in *Ethnicity and the Bible*, ed. Mark G. Brett, Biblical Interpretation Series (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 247-49.

What, then, accounts for the frequency and prominence of sojourn in the patriarchal narratives? This study seeks to answer that question by a thorough investigation of the contribution made by the sojourn references to the Genesis narrative. To bring definition to the project, I have selected a specific approach that provides a distinctive lens through which to view the texts. The heuristic tool I use to shape my textual reading is the sociological theory of Anthony D. Smith, a contemporary scholar working in the area of ethnicity. Smith's theory offers an analytical template relating territorial affiliation and communal election within an understanding of ethnic identity. His categories accord well with the principal themes of the patriarchal narratives in Genesis, and offer a helpful matrix for relating ideas of land and community. Since sojourn relates closely to both these concepts, adopting Smith's thought as an interrogative framework for this study affords a rich payoff.

The first chapter of this thesis sketches the elements of Smith's theory that structure the discussion in the exegetical sections following. The basic case I construct over the course of the study is that sojourn in the patriarchal narratives contributes to a strong ethnic identity for biblical Israel.[9] The ways in which sojourn works to serve this purpose are varied and at times paradoxical. Yet a close reading of the texts, diagnostically sharpened by Smith's theoretical understanding of ethnicity, shows that the sojourn texts all play a role in strengthening communal identity for the people of Israel. My reading thus demonstrates a constructive rationale for sojourn's prominence in the Genesis narrative, and satisfactorily resolves the apparent incongruity that sojourn first presents for the reader.

Parameters and Method

This study investigates the use of the nominal and verbal expressions for "sojourn" in the book of Genesis. It is a delimited study of the verbal forms derived from the root גור and the various forms of the two nouns גֵּר and מָגוֹר, exploring the meanings they communicate in their specific narrative contexts. The project is not a lexical study; it does not address cognate words in the other Semitic languages, or the

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[9] By "biblical Israel" I intend the idealized community referred to as "Israel" in the Hebrew Bible, the putative descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Further references to "Israel" or "the people of Israel" in this thesis refer to this literary construct, not to any specific manifestation of the Israelite community in historical time and space.

use of the forms beyond Genesis or in any extrabiblical literature.[10] It is likewise not a comprehensive study of a concept; it does not examine related fields of meanings such as the stranger, foreigner, or outsider.[11] This study, rather, is an investigation of a particular literary feature of the book of Genesis: the appearance of the word cluster גור√ / גֵּר / מָגוֹר as a *Leitwort* in the patriarchal narratives. This thesis examines the phenomenon of sojourn's repetition by close readings of each instance of the *Leitwort* in both its immediate and its larger narrative contexts. Primary attention is given to the contribution made by each instance of the *Leitwort* to central themes of land and community in Genesis, using Anthony D. Smith's theory of ethnicity to define and frame the primary conceptual categories discussed. Smith's thought helps organize the themes discussed, but this study is not a "Smithian" reading, in that its focus is not on a contribution in the realm of the sociological theory employed. Rather, the core of the project is simply a close, contextual reading of the Hebrew texts, with its exegetical results situated within Smith's theoretical framework of interpretation. The method of this study aptly serves its ultimate conclusion, that sojourn is used as a *Leitwort* in Genesis in order to strengthen the ethnic identity of biblical Israel.

I have chosen the translation "sojourn" for the word cluster גור√ / גֵּר / מָגוֹר, and throughout this study will use the English term "sojourn" (or varying forms of the same English word, such as "sojourner") to indicate any one of the individual Hebrew forms. Several translations of the Hebrew are currently in vogue as alternatives to "sojourn," which has been critiqued as archaic.[12] I prefer the term sojourn for two reasons. First, it maintains continuity between verbal and nominal forms of the word, allowing for smoother and more concise prose on the topic, as well as closer correspondence to Hebrew style in English translation (compare the more cumbersome translation, "resident alien/to reside as an alien").[13] Second, it avoids modern social and political connotations evoked by some alternative

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[10] The study also excludes homonyms II and III, which provide alternative meanings unrelated to sojourn and do not occur in Genesis. See Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1907), 158-59.

[11] Relevant Hebrew words are תּוֹשָׁב and נָכְרִי, both of which appear in Genesis, although only once each (23:4; 31:15).

[12] Spina, 323.

[13] S.R. Driver makes a similar case. S.R. Driver, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy*, 3rd ed., ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902), 126.

translations proposed, such as "resident alien," "immigrant," or "client."[14] While "sojourn" may be an old-fashioned word, it remains a helpful translation of the Hebrew גור√ / גֵּר / מָגוֹר for the purposes of this study.

The meaning of the sojourn word group מָגוֹר / גֵּר / גור√ as it is used in Genesis is best arrived at by consideration of its usage in actual narrative contexts. The exegetical portions of this study will highlight particular aspects of sojourn that are emphasized in different texts; for example, in 17:8 sojourn is contrasted with the possession of land, whereas in 19:9 the social vulnerability of the sojourner is the textual focus. Still, it is useful to begin the analysis with a basic definition of sojourn in hand, to which the various texts add further nuance. Some definitions have cast the net wide to construct a description that includes the sociological features of sojourn gleaned from an aggregate of the known biblical examples, or have imported into the Genesis texts a legal description of sojourn taken from the law codes of the Pentateuch regarding sojourners within Israel.[15] I find it most useful, instead, to start with the simple definition provided by C. Bultmann: "residing in a place where one did not originally belong."[16] This working definition of sojourn will be the launching point for reflections on its usage and contribution in the various texts of Genesis where it occurs.

Analyzing 17 references requires an organizational scheme to structure the exegesis, and simply following the narrative order of appearance does not allow for coherent discussion of thematic and formal features shared between texts that are widely spaced. I have found a division of the texts by literary form to be the optimal scheme for managing this wide-ranging analysis. C. Westermann proposes a broad division of Genesis texts by form-critical categories into three groups: narrative, enumerative (genealogies and itineraries), and promises.[17] The exegetical analysis in this study is divided into three sections following the trio of literary forms

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[14] See R. Alter's similar reasoning. Robert Alter, *Genesis: Translation and Commentary* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1996), 109.

[15] See for example Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, eds., *HAL*, vol. 1 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), 193 (ET Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, and J.J. Stamm, *HALOT*, trans. M.E.J. Richardson, vol. 1 [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994], 201).

[16] Christoph Bultmann, *Der Fremde im antiken Juda: Eine Untersuchung zum sozialen Typenbegriff 'ger' und seinem Bedeutungswandel in der alttestamentlichen Gesetzgebung*, FRLANT 153 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), 17.

[17] Claus Westermann, *Genesis: 2. Teilband, Genesis 12-36*, BKAT I/2 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1981), 20 (ET Claus Westermann, *Genesis 12-36: A Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion [London: SPCK, 1985], 36).

Westermann discerns. Each group of texts is addressed in a separate chapter of the thesis. Chapter Two addresses itinerary notices, the notes which describe the geographical setting of narrative episodes. Sojourn is used six times in this manner (12:10; 20:1; 21:34; 35:27; 36:7; 37:1). Chapter Three discusses promise speeches, in which there are four references to sojourn (15:13; 17:8; 26:3; 28:4). Chapter Four examines references to sojourn in the form of dialogues between characters in a narrative. This category comprises seven occurrences (19:9; 21:23; 23:4; 32:5; 47:4, 9 [x2]).

The literary form of the texts in each chapter dictates the type of analysis used in the exegesis; this leads to some variance in the amount of narrative detail assessed and the relative length of the analysis between the different chapters. Chapter Two on the itinerary notices is the shortest, as itinerary notices are primarily structural devices, and their treatment involves chiefly a big-picture view of the units of text they frame or connect. Structural analysis dominates the exegesis in this chapter. Chapter Three on the promise speeches goes into greater length in investigating the narrative units in which the references are located. Still, promise speeches can be somewhat isolated from the flow of narrative (e.g., in the case of ch. 17), so that the narrative analysis required is somewhat limited. The exegesis in this chapter leans toward thematic analysis of ideas related to the promises speeches. Chapter Four on narrative dialogues is the longest, with the highest number of texts to analyze, as well a rich narrative setting to examine in each instance. Analysis in this section focuses on details of narrative development.

While individual texts may prompt different emphases on particular dimensions of analysis, I attempt in all the chapters to provide balanced readings that attend to all noteworthy linguistic, historical, and narrative features of the texts. Overall, my method has resonances with literary method of exegesis. It does not, however, exclude historical issues. I have chosen to focus primarily on the "final form" of the text, indicating by this term the Masoretic text published in the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*.[18] This choice is not a blanket decision dictated by an exclusivistic literary approach, but a relative degree of priority in which textual history recedes slightly. My reason for de-emphasizing historical criticism lies in observation of the actual distribution of the texts according to classical source

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[18] Karl Elliger and Willhelm Rudolph, eds., *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1984). All English translations of biblical texts are my own.

divisions. The table below shows a general profile of the allocation of the sojourn texts by source, along with the morphological form of each instance of the lexeme.[19]

	JE (or non-P)	P
12:10	verb (infinitive construct)	
15:13[20]	noun (גֵּר)	
17:8		noun (מָגוֹר)
19:9	verb (infinitive construct)	
20:1	verb (waw-consecutive imperfect)	
21:23	verb (waw-consecutive imperfect)	
21:34	verb (perfect)	
23:4		noun (גֵּר)
26:3	verb (imperative)	
28:4		noun (מָגוֹר)
32:5	verb (perfect)	
35:27		verb (perfect)
36:7		noun (מָגוֹר)
37:1		noun (מָגוֹר)
47:4	verb (infinitive construct)	
47:9[21]		noun (מָגוֹר) noun (מָגוֹר)

The table shows a relatively equal distribution of sojourn references between Priestly and non-Priestly sources (nine in JE and seven in P). [22] Dividing the references by literary form as in this study's chapter divisions also yields fairly even

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[19] This table reflects a general consensus gleaned from the work of several scholars. See Antony F. Campbell and Mark A. O'Brien, *Sources of the Pentateuch: Texts, Introductions, Annotations* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 260-62; David M. Carr, *Reading the Fractures of Genesis: Historical and Literary Approaches* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1996), 124-25, 339-40; George W. Coats, *Genesis, with an Introduction to Narrative Literature*, FOTL 1 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1983), 30-33; S.R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, 6th ed., International Theological Library (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1897), 11, 15-17; Richard Elliott Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* (New York: Summit Books, 1987), 247-49; John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*, 2nd ed., ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1930); Claus Westermann, *Genesis: 3. Teilband, Genesis 37-50*, BKAT I/3 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1982) (ET Claus Westermann, *Genesis 37-50: A Continental Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1986]); Westermann, *Genesis: 2*.
[20] 15:13 is problematic, with no clear consensus emerging except that it may be a later addition; it is not, however, generally considered the work of P.
[21] From among the scholars above, A.F. Campbell, M.A. O'Brien, G.W. Coats, and R.E. Friedman do not designate 47:9 as P. Campbell and O'Brien, 262; Coats, 33; Friedman, 249.
[22] A further breakdown of J vs. E results in almost equal distribution as well, with five references allotted to J and four to E. See Driver, *Introduction*, 11, 15-17.

groupings: in the itineraries both JE and P have three references each, in the promises each has two, and in the dialogues JE has four while P has two. A linguistic breakdown shows a prevalence of verbal forms expressing sojourn in JE and nominal forms in P, but exceptions in each direction weaken a case for unique usage (see table above). The only distinctive feature readily apparent is P's use of the particular noun מָגוּר, which does not appear in the non-P material. In the context of a larger portrait for sojourn that features a strong presence in both JE and P, however, the case can still be made that the frequency of sojourn is a literary feature shared between the different historical sources of the text of Genesis. There appears to be low potential yield in arguing for sojourn as a distinctive literary phenomenon in any one source. It is on the basis of this observation that I have chosen to de-emphasize historical critical questions in my textual analysis, focusing attention instead on the ideological contribution made by each reference within the context of the larger, final-form narrative of Genesis.

Accenting ideology, however, raises a question related to the source distribution of the texts. While sojourn may show a strong presence across the lines of source divisions, does it serve similar ideological ends in the different sources? Here a number of scholars, primarily German, have made a case for a distinctive sojourn idea in the Priestly source.[23] P, they contend, introduces the idea of patriarchal sojourn *in Canaan*; this novel and intriguing notion is not shared by the "older" sources.[24] The argument is usually based on a distinction between the

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[23] Reinhard Feldmeier, *Die Christen als Fremde: Die Metapher der Fremde in der antiken Welt, im Urchristentum und im 1. Petrusbrief*, WUNT 64 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1992), 44; Feldmeier, "'Nation'," 243; Theodore Hiebert, *The Yahwist's Landscape: Nature and Religion in Early Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 88-89; Gerhard von Rad, *Das erste Buch Mose: Genesis*, 6th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961), 169-70, 214, 356 (ET Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, trans. John H. Marks, OTL [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961], 195, 245, 402-03); Gerhard von Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testaments: Band I, Die Theologie der geschichtlichen Überlieferungen Israels*, Einführung in die evangelische Theologie 1 (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1957), 172-73 (ET Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology Volume 1: The Theology of Israel's Historical Origins*, trans. D.G.M. Stalker [San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1962], 169); K. Schmid, "The So-Called Yahwist and the Literary Gap between Genesis and Exodus," in *A Farewell to the Yahwist? The Composition of the Pentateuch in Recent European Interpretation*, ed. T.B. Dozeman and K. Schmid, SBL Symposium Series 34 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 43; Josef Schreiner, "Muß ich in der Fremde leben? Eine Frage des alten Israel," in *Dynamik im Wort: Lehre von der Bibel, Leben aus der Bibel*, ed. Josef Schreiner and Joachim Gnilka (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1983), 135, 140; Georg Steins, "'Fremde sind *wir*...': Zur Wahrnehmung des Fremdseins und zur Sorge für die Fremden in alttestamentlicher Perspektive," *Jahrbuch für christliche Sozialwissenschaften* 35 (1994): 146-48.

[24] Feldmeier acknowledges the presence of the idea in the older sources, but lays heavy emphasis on its development in P. Feldmeier, *Die Christen*, 43-44; Feldmeier, "'Nation'," 242-43.

locations of sojourn designated in the textual references.[25] Six of the eight references to sojourn in P (all the texts except 47:9) clearly locate patriarchal sojourn in Canaan. On its own, this observation is noteworthy. JE references, however, locate patriarchal sojourn in Sodom (19:9), Gerar (20:1; 26:3), and Beer-sheba (21:23), locations which are on the borders of Canaan, but at least in the case of the latter two, are included within the territory promised to the patriarchs.[26] Furthermore, both JE and P include references to sojourn in Egypt (JE 12:10; 47:4; P 47:9). A sharp distinction between the geographical designations of sojourn in JE vs. P is unwarranted. Going to the lengths of identifying Israel's homeland as exclusively in the hill territories in order to eliminate Beer-sheba and substantiate a distinctive P ideology, as T. Hiebert argues, is taking a case to the extreme.[27] The different sources of Genesis all include the notion of the patriarchs sojourning in the land that is promised to them as an eventual possession. Minor variations in emphasis may exist, but in the absence of striking and exclusive trends within one source, a focus on source differences lies beyond the level of detail possible in a study of this length.[28]

In the exegetical portions of this study, therefore, observations related to source criticism are offered at points where the interpretive payoff is high. Otherwise, however, the section above serves as the main source critical analysis of this study, validating thereafter an overall exegetical approach that is free to focus on the text's final form. Accordingly, the source critical section above is also the chief portion of the thesis where German secondary literature is dominant. In the remaining sections of this study, a preponderance of Anglophone scholarship may be noted, corresponding with the study's emphasis on literary method.

Related Publications

This study addresses a topic not previously explored in depth. While the material concerning the sojourner (or "alien") in the legal collections of the Hebrew

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[25] G. Steins makes a slightly different argument based on P's use of the nominal form and its redeployment in the law codes; K. Schmid also claims exclusive use of the nominal form in P. Steins: 147-48; Schmid, 43.

[26] Thorough discussion of the promises relevant to these locations follows in the pertinent exegetical sections.

[27] Hiebert, 88-89.

[28] Another proposal has been made suggesting that E's portrait of sojourn in Egypt is more positive than the other sources. The argument is primarily concerned with texts beyond Genesis. See E.W. Heaton, "Sojourners in Egypt," *ExpTim* 58 (1946): 80-82.

Bible has received extensive scholarly attention,[29] the depiction of the patriarchs as sojourners has been largely overlooked. That said, several published works do touch upon the texts concerned, albeit briefly or incompletely. In this section I survey the most prominent of these studies,[30] using the conversation to highlight various aspects of my own treatment of sojourn in Genesis. The discussion below moves from longer works offering surveys of sojourn (Ramírez Kidd and Feldmeier), to shorter works touching on sojourn in Genesis (Miller and Hauge), to monographs on land theology (Davies, Habel, and Brueggemann).

J. E. Ramírez Kidd

Ramírez Kidd's monograph *Alterity and Identity in Israel: The גֵּר in the Old Testament* follows a word-study approach.[31] Ramírez Kidd argues for a sharp distinction between the noun גֵּר and the verb √גור, however, and on this basis launches an exclusive study of the noun form alone. The distinction is overdrawn,[32] and leads Ramírez Kidd to an overly selective approach where texts that are proximate are alternately included in his analysis or excluded based solely on the criterion of noun vs. verb form.[33] The overall picture he paints thus exhibits substantial lacunae. Three examples highlight a need to attend to these gaps.

First, Ramírez Kidd suggests that a positive depiction of sojourn in Egypt, connected with the patriarchal stories, becomes significant during the exilic period.[34]

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[29] See for example two monographs published relatively recently: Bultmann; Christiana van Houten, *The Alien in Israelite Law*, JSOTSup, vol. 107 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1991).

[30] A large number of short articles offer definitions or surveys of sojourn in the HB. Most are focused on the legal references and thus do not contribute significantly to this discussion. Some authors briefly mention patriarchal sojourn as a type for the people of Israel; see Karl Ludwig Schmidt, Martin Anton Schmidt, and Rudolf Meyer, "πάροικος; παροικία; παροικέω," in *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1932), 845 (ET Karl Ludwig Schmidt, Martin Anton Schmidt, and Rudolf Meyer, "πάροικος; παροικία; παροικέω," in *TDNT*, ed. Gerhard Friedrick and Geoffrey W. Bromiley [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1967], 846); R. Martin-Achard, "גור *gūr* als Fremdling weilen," in *THAT*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1971), 412 (ET R. Martin-Achard, "גור *gûr* to sojourn," in *TLOT*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann [Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997], 309).

[31] Ramírez Kidd, 10.

[32] In explaining his five reasons for making the distinction Ramírez Kidd repeatedly cites exceptions to his argument, making his decision to exclude all analysis of the verbal form from his study too sharp a distinction for the evidence marshaled. Ibid., 15-30.

[33] For example, he excludes Deut. 26:5 from his primary analysis while including other texts in Deuteronomy, and cites Gen. 15:13 and 23:4 but disregards the numerous other references to sojourn in Genesis. The 19 references that couple noun and verb forms together in one verse, Ramírez Kidd simply analyzes as instances of the noun, dismissing the accompanying verbal forms as dependent. Ibid., 17.

[34] Ibid., 91-98.

This proposal warrants exegetical attention to the patriarchal narratives, but because Ramírez Kidd has excluded the verb √גור from his study he is not free to pursue such an analysis. Second, Ramírez Kidd notes a connection between pilgrim theology in the Psalms and ancestral sojourn in Canaan, but again does not treat the relevant Genesis texts.[35] Third, Ramírez Kidd briefly outlines the connection between the LXX translation of sojourn texts and the development of the idea of sojourn in the New Testament.[36] He highlights the sojourn of the patriarchs as foundational to Christians' self-identification as an alien people, while neglecting direct analysis of these influential texts. In all, Ramírez Kidd's analysis suggests a greater significance for the sojourn texts in Genesis than the parameters of his study allow. My study aims to correct this omission, and the integration of verbal and nominal forms of sojourn in one study is an essential element of method serving this end. A full examination of references to patriarchal sojourn in texts *beyond* Genesis is beyond the scope of this study, but a thorough treatment of the Genesis texts themselves lays a solid foundation for further investigation of the larger connections Ramírez Kidd suggests.

R. Feldmeier

Feldmeier, a New Testament scholar, has published extensive work on sojourn.[37] His explorations of the terms πάροικος/παροικέω/παροικία address their HB antecedents, גֵּר / גוּר / מְגוּרִם, making his work a valuable conversation partner for this study. Feldmeier focuses on the Priestly document's presentation of sojourn in the patriarchal narratives, calling it a striking and programmatic emphasis.[38] Feldmeier associates this accent on sojourn with exilic thought; in this context the foreignness of the patriarchs would have had "a reassuring function," for "the patriarchs too were strangers, to whom no land belonged."[39]

Feldmeier's emphasis on ideological features of sojourn highlights an aspect of method that is significant for this study. Feldmeier maintains that "there is more than historical memory" behind the narrative depiction of patriarchal sojourn.[40] Instead he proposes that P is programmatically advancing an ideology which speaks

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[35] Ibid., 104.
[36] Ibid., 118-29.
[37] See especially Feldmeier, *Die Christen*; Feldmeier, "'Nation'," 241-70.
[38] Feldmeier, *Die Christen*, 44; Feldmeier, "'Nation'," 243.
[39] Feldmeier, "'Nation'," 243.
[40] Ibid.

to the socio-historical situation of its time. Feldmeier explicitly places his exegetical focus upon the ideological shape of sojourn concepts and the resulting range of impact they have on communities of faith. In describing the powerful effects of the sojourn idea he writes,

> The affirmation and positive interpretation of their own strangerhood has contributed substantially to the fact that Jews scattered in the diaspora—and even more so Christians, who were in the minority, outsiders in society—were able to see themselves as the people of God, despite all attempts to make them into enemies, to exclude them, and despite all pressure on them to assimilate.[41]

Feldmeier emphasizes here the influence of an idea rather than the residue of a concrete situation; clarifying the distinction, he writes, "The surprising thing is that Israel does not fall apart as a result of these negative experiences but *is able to interpret this experience of alienation theologically and thus to integrate it in its self-understanding and its relationship to God.*"[42]

Exegetes of HB and NT sojourn material encounter a parallel structure: social circumstances of communal alienation, and the rise of a literary theme portraying sojourn as a category of identity. Two camps in NT exegesis center around (1) a sociological interpretation, put forward by J.H. Elliott, maintaining that the sojourn theme in Christian literature reflects concrete social estrangement of the Christian community,[43] and (2) a metaphorical or ideological interpretation, of which Feldmeier is a leading example, emphasizing the function of sojourn ideology in the formation of Christian identity.[44] Feldmeier's methodology is much more fully explored with relation to the NT debate about sojourn. It raises a question, however, which is equally relevant for exegesis of this theme in the Hebrew Bible.

In parallel with Elliott's sociological reading of the NT sojourn material, F. A. Spina argues for a concrete socio-historical sojourn experience underlying the sojourn references in the Hebrew Bible.[45] He draws a connection between גֵּרִים and

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[41] Ibid., 242.

[42] Ibid., 245. Emphasis original. See also Feldmeier, *Die Christen*, 46.

[43] For Elliott's distinction between socio-political estrangement and its literary or figurative interpretations, and Feldmeier's critique of Elliot's approach, see John H. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Interpretation of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 35, 42-43, 448-49, 130-32; Feldmeier, *Die Christen*, 203-10.

[44] For a thorough discussion of the dichotomy in NT scholarship on this topic see Benjamin H. Dunning, "Aliens and Sojourners: Self as Other in the Rhetoric of Early Christian Identity" (PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 2005), 14-36.

[45] Spina, 321-35.

עִבְרִים as sharing in common the meaning "outlaws, fugitives and immigrants," and harmonizes this past experience of social alienation with the Mendenhall-Gottwald hypothesis for the genesis of Israel. His goal is "to argue that this [gērîm] tradition preserves a genuine historical memory."[46] Spina's article follows in the sociological tradition of M. Weber's argument that HB dualistic insider/outsider ethics draw their shape from the Jews' status as a "pariah" or "guest" people, evolved from partly metic roots.[47] These works are undoubtedly relevant to the sojourn theme as sociological investigations of "historical memory" which serves as a backdrop to the theme's literary development. In this thesis, however, I do not evaluate the validity of such historical claims. My concern, rather, is restricted to the way in which sojourn ideas are ideologically developed within the texts of the Hebrew Bible. In Feldmeier's words, the sojourn material contains "more than historical memory." It is this "more" that commands the exegetical attention of this study.

Feldmeier's analysis focuses on the "affirmation and positive interpretation of their own strangerhood" in the case of both diaspora Jews and early Christians. Undergirding this notion of *positive* re-interpretation is the valuation of sojourn as a fundamentally *negative* category to begin with. Feldmeier underscores the negative associations of sojourn repeatedly, and describes sojourn as "a 'thorn in the flesh' against any kind of national hubris."[48] He finds the deployment of sojourn as a category of identity "unusual," "a remarkable special feature of Israel,"[49] and remarks that it is surprising that the category of strangeness comes to the fore (if only occasionally) in the Hebrew Bible.[50] This fact is even more striking when the Hebrew Bible is placed in contrast with early Jewish literature, where Feldmeier finds the category of sojourn used only in reference to life outside the promised land.

> The relatively rare Old Testament self-description of the nation or of individual believers as "strangers" is not taken up in vast tracts of early Jewish literature. Indeed it is even suppressed. It is emphasised that the Jews are, and always were, full citizens in Israel…Quite deliberately, then, *living in the land as a situation of fulfilled promise is contrasted with the existence as strangers*. The corollary of this is that in its own land Israel is not a sojourner at all, but a full citizen, designated as such by God. This connection is so close that even the

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[46] Ibid., 322.

[47] Max Weber, *Ancient Judaism*, trans. Hans H. Gerth and Don Martindale (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1952), 3.

[48] Feldmeier, "'Nation'," 244.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid., 242.

foreignness of the patriarchs, so frequently emphasised in the book of Genesis, is suppressed and the text is emended accordingly.[51]

Feldmeier's observations tease out a certain complexity in the sojourn concept. On the one hand, early Jewish interpretation of HB texts viewed the *valuation* of sojourn as negative, correlating with the *location* of sojourn outside the promised land, and the *duration* of sojourn as limited to the past period of life outside the land. On the other hand, another direction of development (furthered in the Christian interpretation of HB texts) conceived of the *location* of sojourn to include life within the land itself (or abstracted as the position of humanity before God), extended its *duration* to encompass the present (or all of life), and inverted its *valuation* to a positive, religious category expressive of a relationship to Yahweh.

While different traditions of interpretation may have emphasized one of the sides above to the exclusion of the other, in actuality both valencies of sojourn can be traced within the HB, and especially within the patriarchal narratives.[52] Genesis portrays sojourn that is negative, temporary, and outside the land, but it also depicts sojourn that is positive, permanent, and pervasive. The second type of sojourn is surprising, as Feldmeier notes, as it seems to militate against strong ethnic identity and attachment to the land. Yet it not only appears in the Genesis texts, but also exists alongside and in interaction with the first type, which is more easily reconciled with ethnic sentiment. The exegetical portion of this study will attempt to unpack the complexities of the Genesis texts, clarifying the polyvalent and occasionally counter-intuitive ways in which sojourn contributes to communal identity. I will argue that the Genesis narrative employs both types of sojourn, as well as a spectrum of depictions ranging between them, to strengthen Israelite ethnic identity. Sojourn in Genesis is a complex theme capable of holding in tension two seemingly opposed values, both of which are important for the identity of the people of Israel.

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[51] Ibid., 247-48. Emphasis original.

[52] Feldmeier leaves open the possibility for both positive and negative understandings of sojourn in references within the HB to the patriarchal stories: "Ob diese Neuerzählung der Vätergeschichten nur beabsichtigte, die Israeliten der Treue Gottes zu seinen Zusagen zu versichern und so in ihrer Hoffnung auf Rückkehr zu vergewissern, oder ob in diesen Texten die Fremdlingsschaft auch an sich selbst als etwas Positives gesehen wurde, kann hier nicht entschieden werden." Feldmeier, *Die Christen*, 45.

P.D. Miller, Jr.

In an essay "Israel as Host to Strangers," Miller explores what he calls "sojourning stories" in the Hebrew Bible.[53] His essay contributes valuable analysis of narrative material in Genesis, although its coverage is not comprehensive. Miller's primary aim in this essay is to underscore the value of hospitality as a biblical injunction. To this end, he interrogates "sojourning stories" with the sole query of whether they depict good or bad practices of hospitality. Thus the patriarchs and their wives exhibit exemplary hospitality; the Hittites' sale of land to Abraham typifies appropriate welcome; and inhospitality in Sodom and Egypt dramatize the plight of vulnerable aliens. Ancestral experiences of sojourn, then, whether in Canaan or Egypt, serve the purpose of providing a foil to the kind of ethics Israel is enjoined to practice in the legal codes, where it occupies the role of "host" in relation to sojourners in its midst.

Miller adroitly traces links between narrative stories of ancestral sojourn and legal material concerning sojourners, highlighting the motive clauses which are instrumental in this connection. His essay provides a cameo model for the larger, more comprehensive project suggested above in the discussion of Ramírez Kidd's book, that of tracing how HB texts deploy the memory of ancestral sojourn in statements about Israel's identity. In Miller's essay, however, only a single strand of this polyvalent theme is treated. He calls attention to hospitality and ethics of interaction with the Other, and these do represent a significant dimension of the sojourn theme that will receive extensive treatment in Chapter Four of this study. Miller excludes sojourn references in Genesis that do not illustrate hospitality ethics, however, and thus misses an opportunity for a deeper assessment of sojourn's complex role in identity construction. My study, taking inspiration from Miller's essay, fills out the details of the ethical role of sojourn in Genesis, but also supplies a much-needed examination of sojourn's role in informing themes of land and election. These three concerns—ethics, land, and election—form a trio of topics by which each text's contribution is measured. Chapter One of this study outlines the theoretical framework underlying the selection of these three particular topics, and the subsequent exegetical chapters will each focus on one of the three areas in turn.

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[53] Patrick D. Miller, Jr., "Israel as Host to Strangers," in *Israelite Religion and Biblical Theology: Collected Essays*, JSOTSup (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 548-71.

M.R. Hauge

Hauge's twin articles[54] undertake a literary reading of the Genesis narratives focusing on dynamics of estrangement from and return to Canaan. Sojourn is mentioned often in his analysis, and most of the sojourn references are addressed, but Hauge does not isolate sojourn language as a delimited parameter for his study.[55] Rather, he incorporates sojourn into a general examination of geographical movement into and out of Canaan, and its interrelation with other key "motifs" such as family conflict and material blessing. Hauge offers creative and sensitive observations on the narrative development of these motifs. Many of the overarching patterns he identifies coincide with my own observations; these resemblances will be noted in the exegetical chapters of this study as appropriate. Two aspects of his method, however, detract from the clarity of Hauge's study. First, Hauge does not clearly identify which textual referents he uses as indicators of his category of "estrangement." Thus sojourn language is often important in his analysis, but some sojourn references are neglected.[56] Hauge likewise labels some narrative scenarios as locations of estrangement that are not demarcated by sojourn references, and does not defend this identification with explicit textual support.[57] Attention is needed to the literary methods by which "homeland" and "estrangement" are established and delineated in the world of the text. My study brings clarity to Hauge's somewhat blurred portrait by utilizing clear linguistic parameters and attending closely to textual evidence in the development of the textual portrait of sojourn.

Second, in his eagerness to depict the relevance of estrangement in Genesis to exilic themes, Hauge short-circuits the process of textual analysis and reads "exile" into every instance of estrangement he identifies, conflating the two categories throughout his analysis.[58] Hauge's projection of exile into the Genesis narrative is

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[54] Martin Ravndal Hauge, "The Struggles of the Blessed in Estrangement I," *ST* 29 (1975): 1-30; Martin Ravndal Hauge, "The Struggles of the Blessed in Estrangement II," *ST* 29 (1975): 113-46.

[55] Hauge highlights sojourn language as "common to" the stories of estrangement he treats, and lists a number of sojourn references. He does not, however, clarify the precise textual boundaries of his investigation. Hauge, "Struggles II," 113.

[56] Hauge refers to 12 of the 16 sojourn texts in Genesis. See Ibid.: 113, 117, 137-39.

[57] E.g., Hauge maintains without textual evidence that the Shechem story stresses Jacob as "the total Stranger." Ibid.: 123.

[58] Hauge treats sojourn language under the heading "Exile motif" and thereafter uses the terms "estrangement" and "exile" completely interchangeably; e.g., Egypt is at times the "Land of Exile" and at times the "Land of Estrangement," and Jacob's struggles are in the same paragraph described as characteristic of the life of a stranger, and as examples of the concrete problems of exile. Hauge, "Struggles I," 27; Hauge, "Struggles II," 122, 114.

alien to the language of the texts. Patient exegesis of the geographical symbolism expressed by the text is a more appropriate first step, after which the question can be raised as to the possible significance of the textual message for an exilic context. This study will bracket questions of historical context in order to focus on a thorough literary analysis of the texts concerned.

W.D. Davies, N. Habel, and W. Brueggemann

Three authors who have published surveys of land ideologies in the Hebrew Bible allot a role for sojourn in their overall schematization. Since some similarities pertain between their treatments, I analyze them together here. Each author presents an overall schematization in which a variety of ideologies are situated.

1) Davies proposes two major divisions: first, the dominant thrust of Jewish theology of land, and second, divergences found in varying strands of the tradition.[59] He locates sojourn amongst these latter divergences, citing the direct example of the Rechabites, and the indirect example of the patriarchs who "represent the classic simplicity of the ideal human life," i.e., nomadic values.[60] In his overall framework, however, Davies does not view these divergent voices as presenting serious ideological alternatives to traditional land theology.[61]

2) Habel identifies six distinctive ideologies of land expressed by separate literary units of the Hebrew Bible.[62] He discerns an "immigrant ideology" in the Abraham narratives, "immigrant" being his preferred translation for the גר / גור sojourn terminology.[63] Habel finds this ideology at odds with the other five ideologies he describes, painting a stark contrast in particular between their attitudes toward the original inhabitants of the land.[64] For Habel, the counter-voice of the sojourn ideology exists alongside the other dominant land ideologies in unresolved tension.

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[59] W.D. Davies, *The Territorial Dimension of Judaism: With a Symposium and Further Reflections* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991).
[60] Ibid., 38-42.
[61] Ibid., 42.
[62] Norman C. Habel, *The Land Is Mine: Six Biblical Land Ideologies*, OBT (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995).
[63] Ibid., 119.
[64] Ibid., 115,125-30.

3) Brueggemann portrays the tension within land theology using a narrative/historical framework.[65] He portrays landedness as the biblical ideal, and landlessness as the situation in which Israel finds itself "on the way" to the fulfillment of this ideal—a position which he describes as a "posture of faith."[66] Israel's history alternates between landedness and landlessness, with three periods of landlessness (also called "images"): sojourn, wandering, and exile.[67] Brueggemann equates the period of sojourn with the Genesis patriarchal narratives. He views the narratives of landlessness as helping to define more clearly the shape of land theology, serving as a negative pole that challenges and informs the positive pole of landedness. In Brueggemann's analysis, then, sojourn serves to set up a dialectic tension with land possession, resulting in an overall land theology that is richer and more nuanced.

All three authors suggest a significance for sojourn that demands a fuller exegetical treatment than their studies undertake (Davies merely mentions sojourn, Habel restricts his treatment to the Abraham narratives, and Brueggemann treats only a fraction of the Genesis sojourn texts). Their placement of sojourn within overall schema of land ideologies provides a compelling rationale for the thorough investigation it receives in this study, as well as offering a set of templates for describing the relationship of sojourn to concepts of land possession. Taking my cue from the schema above, I will examine how sojourn in Genesis informs the conceptual relationship between the people of Israel and their land. In a departure from the conclusions above, however, I will argue that sojourn ultimately supports a strong ethnic identity by combining traditional and non-traditional land ideologies *together*. In other words, the tension described by the three authors above as a feature of land theology as a whole, and in which sojourn is positioned as one pole, I locate within sojourn itself. Sojourn has the ability to embrace both poles, landedness and landlessness (or as described earlier, a negative and a positive valuation for sojourn respectively). This ambidextrous capability reveals both the sophistication of sojourn and also its utility as a versatile concept supporting a strong ethnic identity. Once again, it is the theoretical approach described in the next chapter that provides a

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[65] Walter Brueggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith*, 2nd ed., OBT (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002).
[66] Ibid., 6.
[67] Ibid., 5-8.

working framework for explicating notions of ethnicity, territory, and their interrelationship. It is to this sociological material that we now turn.

CHAPTER ONE
Theoretical Tools: Anthony D. Smith

Anthony D. Smith is an eminent sociologist recently retired (in 2004) from his position as Professor of Ethnicity and Nationalism at the London School of Economics, after over thirty years of contribution in which he became established as a magisterial voice in his field. Smith's scores of published works range across several broad avenues of investigation and encompass both modern and pre-modern periods, although he is most renowned for his work on nationalism. In this field he has charted an alternative course to the divided camps of modernists and perennialists, focusing on continuities of cultural heritage from ethnic communities to modern nations, and introducing the *ethnie* (Smith uses the French term for an ethnic community) as a broad preparatory category for the emergence of nations.[1] Smith often examines the case of ancient Israel in the framework of the debate over the antiquity of nations and nationalism.[2] In these discussions he interacts with biblical scholars working in a similar vein, most notably S. Grosby.[3]

Smith's argument for Israel's status as a nation does not figure in this study, however, which draws instead on Smith's more recent work on ethnic identity. The work of Smith and others on the question of ancient Israel as a nation is concerned primarily with concrete territorial sovereignty and forms of public life, as investigated by historical methods. This study, though not unrelated to such investigations, is primarily concerned with components of ethnic identity as they find expression in literary texts. The historic forms and institutions of ethnic life, whether or not they are classified in categories of "nation" and "state," are temporarily bracketed out of consideration. Instead I attend in this study to the symbolic or

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[1] Smith defines an *ethnie* as "a named human population with myths of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more elements of common culture, a link with a homeland and a sense of solidarity among at least some of its members." Anthony D. Smith and John Hutchinson, "Introduction," in *Ethnicity*, ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 6-7.

[2] Cf. Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 107-08; Anthony D. Smith, *The Antiquity of Nations* (Cambridge: Polity, 2004), 127-53; Anthony D. Smith, *The Nation in History: Historiographical Debates about Ethnicity and Nationalism*, The Menahem Stern Jerusalem Lectures (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2000), 46-51.

[3] For a sample of Grosby's work on ancient Israel, see Steven Grosby, "Religion and Nationality in Antiquity: The Worship of Yahweh and Ancient Israel," in *Nationalism: Critical Concepts in Political Science*, ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (London: Routledge, 2000), 439-76.

cultural ingredients of ethnic identity, as defined by Smith's work on this topic. Three aspects of Smith's work on ethnic identity are particularly relevant for this study and receive attention in the exposition below: his ethno-symbolic approach to ethnic studies, his understanding of ethnic myth, and his analysis of the function of territoriality and election as elements in the formation of ethnic identity.

Ethno-Symbolism

The term "ethnicity studies" came into prominence in the 1960s; since then, the field has been broadly divided between two theoretical approaches, the "primordialist" and the "instrumentalist." The literature on these rival approaches is vast, and the paths of the debate well-trodden.[4] Anthony D. Smith has developed a third approach, however, which borrows from both primordialist and instrumentalist theories, and which he has termed "historic ethno-symbolism." Smith's ethno-symbolic approach offers an appropriate and useful theoretical framework for this study; a brief outline of its theoretical basis will serve as a foundation for the particular aspects of Smith's thought utilized in the textual analysis to come.

Primordialist approaches to ethnicity posit that ethnic ties are universal, natural, and inherent in human nature. Since ethnicity is one of the givens of human existence, it is thus "primordial," age-old and immemorial, a perennial feature of human history and society. Smith rejects this older view, generally outmoded in present-day academia.[5]

More recent versions of primordialist thought, however, have attributed the ineffable power of ethnic bonds and their enduring character not to the bonds themselves but to the perceptions of the group's members.[6] Smith aligns himself to some extent with this updated primordialism, referring to his own approach as

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[4] For an overview of theoretical literature on ethnicity see Richard H. Thompson, *Theories of Ethnicity: A Critical Appraisal*, Contributions in Sociology 82 (New York: Greenwood, 1989).

[5] Anthony D. Smith, "Culture, Community and Territory: The Politics of Ethnicity and Nationalism," *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 72, no. 3 (1996): 446; Smith, *Myths*, 4-5, 98, 173-74; Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 3, 210.

[6] Prominent proponents of this primordialist approach include E. Shils and C. Geertz. See Edward Shils, "Primordial, Personal, Sacred and Civil Ties," *British Journal of Sociology* 8, no. 2 (1957): 113-45; Clifford Geertz, "The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States," in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays by Clifford Geertz*, ed. Clifford Geertz (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 255-310.

"mildly primordialist."[7] *Mildly*, because for Smith, ethnic attributes are cultural and subjective, not objective and primordial; it is the perceptions of ethnic bonds that are significant for a community rather than the actual facts of ancestry, territory, and history. *Primordialist*, because Smith does qualify the constructed nature of ethnic markers; they are not infinitely mutable or fluid, as will become clear in his critique of instrumentalism.[8]

The *instrumentalist* school of historical and sociological thought—also known as constructionism—is currently the dominant explanatory paradigm in the field of ethnicity.[9] Instrumentalism views ethnicity as "a resource to be mobilized, or an instrument to be employed"[10]—hence its name. For instrumentalists, ethnicity is a shifting bundle of attitudes and perceptions; the contents of collective identities and their meanings are plastic and highly malleable. "Human beings are continually moving in and out of these collective identities. They choose, and construct, their identities according to the situation in which they find themselves. Hence, for instrumentalists, identity tends to be 'situational' rather than pervasive…"[11] Ethnicity, in short, is a "strategic choice."[12] Following F. Barth's now-classic understanding of social boundary mechanisms, the markers of ethnicity are constructed along the borders between a group and those outside it.[13] Ethnic identities, therefore, are not fixed, but rather made and remade by continuous transactions across the boundaries between "us" and "them."[14] For instrumentalists, the cultural content of ethnic

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[7] Anthony D. Smith, "States and Homelands: the Social and Geopolitical Implications of National Territory," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 10, no. 3 (1981): 200.

[8] Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 22-24.

[9] For examples of the instrumentalist approach, see Elizabeth Tonkin, Maryon McDonald, and Malcolm Chapman, "Introduction—History and Social Anthropology," in *History and Ethnicity*, ed. Malcolm Chapman, Maryon McDonald, and Elizabeth Tonkin, ASA Monographs 27 (London: Routledge, 1989), 1-21; Daniel Bell, "Ethnicity and Social Change," in *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*, ed. Nathan Glazier and Daniel P. Moynihan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 141-74; Jonathan Y. Okamura, "Situational Ethnicity," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 4, no. 4 (1981): 452-65.

[10] Anthony D. Smith, "The Politics of Culture: Ethnicity and Nationalism," in *Companion Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, ed. Tim Ingold (London: Routledge, 1994), 707.

[11] Anthony D. Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era* (Cambridge: Polity, 1995), 30.

[12] Bell, 171.

[13] Barth argues that the critical focus of investigation should be the boundary defining the group, not the "cultural stuff" it encloses. Fredrik Barth, "Introduction," in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, ed. Fredrik Barth (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1969), 15.

[14] A growing area of interest in biblical interpretation focuses on ethnicity as a boundary mechanism. An example is a recent collection of essays edited by M.G. Brett; Brett's introduction lays out the theoretical approach of the volume. Mark G. Brett, "Interpreting Ethnicity: Method, Hermeneutics,

identity changes with diverse situational circumstances, and according to the perceptions and understandings of each member.[15]

Smith does not disagree with instrumentalists in their general understanding of ethnic identity as a construction. He differs from them, however, in his estimation of the freedom of this process of construction, in particular with regard to the collective past. Instrumentalists regard the communal past as "malleable and ambiguous in its message."[16] Based on the interests and needs of the present, it is "used, selectively appropriated, remembered, forgotten, or invented."[17] The past, for instrumentalists, becomes a social construction that is entirely a product of the present, defined and constructed according to current preoccupations. [18] Smith criticizes instrumentalists for viewing the past as a "sweet shop in which one can freely 'pick and mix' according to present needs and predilections." [19] Our understanding of the past, he counters, "is inevitably shaped by the frameworks of meaning handed down from previous generations, even when we dissent from their particular views of the past."[20] Smith claims that instrumentalists show a serious "failure to distinguish genuine constructs from long-term processes and structures in which successive generations have been socialized." [21] There are historical parameters, in other words, to the constructed nature of ethnicity. Instrumentalists, however, deny the power of the past as a received structure determining human agency.[22]

Because of their shift away from history as a locus of analysis, Smith argues, instrumentalist accounts of ethnic phenomena have inadequate explanatory power. Without exploring historical antecedents and their continuing influence, they cannot predict the formation of collective identities or explore the reasons they emerge instead of others, and why they have the distinctive character they do. [23]

Ethics," in *Ethnicity and the Bible*, ed. Mark G. Brett, Biblical Interpretation Series (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 3-22.
[15] Okamura: 452, 457-58.
[16] Tonkin, McDonald, and Chapman, 8.
[17] Ibid., 5.
[18] Smith, *Myths*, 12.
[19] Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 168. See also Smith, *Myths*, 180.
[20] Smith, *Myths*, 23-24.
[21] Ibid., 9.
[22] Smith, *Antiquity*, 96.
[23] Ibid., 68, 78.

Instrumentalist accounts, Smith claims, are both historically shallow and sociologically implausible.[24]

Smith urges instead that ethnic studies must accommodate collective historical memory.[25] Many people believe in their past and are guided by it; for them it shapes the present, and underpins collective identity. Smith states we must take this belief seriously—though "not at face value."[26] Disregarding ethnic sensibilities of historical rootedness means overlooking the potent role of popular motivation and collective understanding.[27] Instrumentalists, Smith contends, omit the powerful influence of history on human belief, and thus obscure the "vital popular dimension" and preclude the study of relations between present activities and past legacies and traditions.[28]

To combine the insights of instrumentalist and primordialist approaches and find a middle ground between the extremes of the debate, Smith has developed the approach he terms *historic ethno-symbolism*.[29] The first component of the term comes from Smith's belief that history shapes and sets limits to our discourses, and to the premise of culture as purely a construct of the human imagination.[30] Eschewing the polarities of both sociological schools, he maintains that ethnic groups "are not fixed and immutable entities…but neither are they completely malleable and fluid processes and attitudes, at the mercy of every outside force."[31] Ethnic groups are both dynamic and enduring, and it is history that gives them continuity. Smith describes the limiting parameters of the ethnic past as,

> …a heritage and traditions received from one generation to another, but in slightly or considerably changed form, which set limits to the community's outlook and cultural contents. A certain tradition of images, cults, customs, rites and artifacts, as well as certain events, heroes, landscapes and values, come to form a distinctive repository

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[24] Smith, *Myths*, 170.

[25] Smith, *Antiquity*, 74.

[26] Smith, *Chosen*, 167-68; Smith, *Antiquity*, 52.

[27] Smith, *Antiquity*, 69.

[28] Smith, *Origins*, 211; Anthony D. Smith, "History and National Destiny: Responses and Clarifications," in *History and National Destiny: Ethnosymbolism and its Critics*, ed. Montserrat Guibernau and John Hutchinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 196.

[29] Several other scholars adopt a similar approach and interact directly with Smith's ideas, notably J. Hutchinson and J. Armstrong. A recently published volume gathers essays from leading scholars in assessment of Smith's ethno-symbolic approach: Montserrat Guibernau and John Hutchinson, eds., *History and National Destiny: Ethnosymbolism and its Critics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

[30] Smith, *National*, 159.

[31] Smith, *Origins*, 211.

of ethnic culture, to be drawn upon selectively by successive generations of the community.[32]

According to Smith, these key components recur in a community's history, and thus "impose limits on the way subsequent generations grasp the experiences of their communal forebears."[33] For Smith, history "sets clear limits to subsequent interpretations of itself, irrespective of the ideology of the interpreter."[34] The ethnic past acts as "a constraint on 'invention',"[35] so that while Smith allows the instrumentalists their claim that our perceptions of the past are to some extent shaped by the present, he parts company with them in maintaining that "that past, as it is handed down from generation to generation in the form of subjective 'ethno-history', sets limits to current aspirations and perceptions. The communal past defines to a large extent our identity…."[36]

Smith clearly qualifies this constraining past as *subjective* history. Collective cultural identity refers, he writes,

> …not to some fixed pattern or uniformity of elements over time, but rather to a sense of shared *continuity* on the part of successive generations of a given unit of population, and to shared *memories* or earlier periods, events and personages in the history of the unit. From these two components we can derive a third: the collective belief in a common destiny of that unit and its culture. From a subjective standpoint, there can be no collective cultural identity without shared memories or a sense of continuity on the part of those who feel they belong to that collectivity. So the subjective perception and understanding of the communal past by each generation of a given cultural unit of population—the 'ethno-history' of that collectivity, as opposed to a historian's judgment of that past—is a defining element in the concept of cultural identity…[37]

A "sense of continuity," "shared memories," and "belief in a common destiny" form a subjective "ethno-history." This history, the collective memory of the community, is vital to its group identity.[38]

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[32] Smith, *National*, 38.

[33] Smith, *Myths*, 179.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Smith, *Antiquity*, 88.

[36] Ibid., 89.

[37] Smith, *Myths*, 228. Emphasis original. See also Smith, *National*, 25.

[38] Smith clarifies that he accepts the importance of cultural boundaries, or "border guards," stressed by instrumentalists such as Barth. Ethno-symbolism adds to this understanding, however, a focus on the distinctive cultural elements endowing bounded collectivities with a unique historical "complexion." A self-definition over and against the other is therefore complemented by and partially dependent upon collective attachment to shared myths, symbols, and memories. Smith, "Politics," 709.

In placing the perception of shared history at the center of his understanding of ethnic identity, Smith elevates the cultural and symbolic elements of ethnicity over and above demographic differentiae. The second part of the term "historic ethno-symbolism" derives from this focus on the symbolic, which for Smith means that the clues to the nature of ethnic groups are to be found in the values and memories encoded in the group's cultural heritage.[39] This cultural heritage, Smith claims, attracts a "social magnetism and psychological charge," so that subsequent generations construct their social maps within a matrix formed by strong social attachment to this heritage.[40] He expands,

> …the more permanent cultural attributes of memory, value, myth and symbolism…are often recorded and immortalized in the arts, languages, sciences and laws of the community which, though subject to a slower development, leave their imprint on the perceptions of subsequent generations and shape the structures and atmosphere of the community through the distinctive traditions they deposit.[41]

The core of ethnic identity, in Smith's definition, lies in a quartet of myths, symbols, historical memories, and central values which he summarizes as a "myth-symbol complex."[42] This distinctive ethnic myth-symbol complex combines historical fact and legendary elaboration in a single potent vision which provides a bedrock of shared meanings and ideals for the ethnic community.[43] Ethnic myth and symbol play a crucial role in ethnic identity because they embody "the corpus of beliefs and sentiments which the guardians of ethnicity preserve, diffuse and transmit to future generations."[44] Additionally, there is an aesthetic dimension to the function of the myth-symbol complex:

> …ethnic symbols provide satisfying forms, and ethnic myths are conveyed in apt genres, for communication and mobilization. As they emerge from the collective experiences of successive generations, the myths coalesce and are edited into chronicles, epics and ballads, which combine cognitive maps of the community's history and situation with poetic metaphors of its sense of dignity and identity. The fused and elaborated myths provide an overall framework of meaning for the ethnic community, a *mythomoteur*, which 'makes

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[39] Smith, *Origins*, 211-12.
[40] Ibid., 206-07.
[41] Ibid., 3-4.
[42] Here Smith follows John Armstrong's definition of the "myth-symbol complex." Smith, "History," 199.
[43] Smith, *Myths*, 57; Smith, *Origins*, 15.
[44] Smith, *Origins*, 15.

sense' of its experiences and defines its 'essence'. Without a *mythomoteur* a group cannot define itself to itself or to others, and cannot inspire or guide collective action.[45]

Attending to ethnic myth, as the ethno-symbolic approach demands, means careful attention to the cultural traditions which act as "carriers" of the myth-symbol complex. Collective memories are transmitted, Smith enumerates,

> …through oral traditions of the family, clan or community and its religious specialists. In other cases, oral traditions are supplemented, sometimes overshadowed, by canonical texts—epics, chronicles, hymns, prophecies, law-codes, treatises, songs, and the like—as well as by various forms of art, crafts, architecture, music, and dance. All of these—tales and legends, documents, objects—embody and crystallize popular memories and myths—local, regional and pan-ethnic. Sometimes, as with the traditions of the twelve Israelite tribes, they may be welded together and edited into a single canon.[46]

Smith's ethno-symbolic approach thus calls for the examination of literary and artistic forms of cultural heritage in light of their social function as carriers of ethnic myths. The subjective history of the ethnic group, its collective memory or "ethno-history," is crystallized in this symbolic matrix which unifies the ethnic community, marks off its boundaries, and functions as the framework into which subsequent generations of the ethnic community are socialized.[47] Ethnic myth, then, lies at the heart of ethnic identity.

Smith's ethno-symbolic approach opens a distinctive avenue into the investigation of biblical texts. The Hebrew Bible can be broadly classified according to Smith's understanding as the carrier of a myth-symbol complex, a crystallization of subjective history particular to an ethnic community.[48] This "crystallization," of course, is complex and varied in both its sources and its signification, but Smith's conception of ethnic history presumes polyvalent, competing, and even divergent strands of meaning.[49] His category of ethno-history is highly serviceable for interpreting the Hebrew Bible.

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[45] Ibid., 23-24. Smith uses the term *mythomoteur* to mean a constitutive political myth. For the derivation of the term see Smith, *Origins*, 229.

[46] Smith, *Myths*, 208.

[47] Ibid., 14.

[48] Smith specifically references the ethnic role of the Hebrew Bible as ethno-history. The HB may function in this way in relation to Israel in both ancient and modern times, to the Jewish people in a broad non-national sense, and at a symbolic level, to Christians who perceive themselves as "children of Abraham" with a spiritualized understanding of descent. Smith, *Origins*, 63.

[49] Smith notes that myths and memories are subject to considerable dispute and change, with rival versions of communal ethno-history competing for popular allegiance. The sense of communal

Some key methodological implications may be drawn from the discussion thus far. Utilizing Smith's understanding of ethnic identity means that this study focuses on the social function of the Hebrew Bible, inasmuch as it is a vehicle of a subjective communal history which both communicates and constructs Israelite ethnic identity. Genesis, in particular, tells the stories of Israel's first ancestors and their initial experiences in the land of Israel. Smith's framework of ethno-symbolism allows for the investigation of these founding stories as the carriers of values central to group self-identification. This ethno-symbolic framework demands, first, the elevation of certain themes in the analysis which are central to the construction of communal identity; further exploration of these themes as proposed by Smith follows below. Second, ethno-symbolism allows for the temporary bracketing of concrete historical questions which often dominate discussions of Israelite origins. As has been clarified in the discussion above, Smith preserves a delicate balance in his relating of ethnic identity to history. In applying his framework to Genesis, likewise, historical concerns are neither banished nor given center stage. The text, rather, is read as "subjective history;" this means a focus upon the symbolic significance of the ancestral stories, as memories which define the past and direct the future for the *ethnie* claiming this text as its heritage.

Ethno-symbolism provides a rewarding framework for developing the significance of the sojourn material in particular. The role Smith gives to historic memory in ethnic identity frames Israel's stories of ancestral sojourn as an element of its collective identity. Thus we may glean from Smith's ethno-symbolic framework the leading question of this study: What meaning do the Genesis texts give to ancestral sojourn as a component of Israel's defining ethno-history? In other words, what contribution does the theme of ancestral sojourn make to Israel's ethnic myth?

This question points toward two more aspects of Smith's thought which are significant for this study and require further explication: first, his understanding of the form and content of ethnic myth, and second, the particular functions of territoriality and election in ethnic identification.

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identity is reinterpreted and reconstructed at periodic intervals, yet its distinctive character persists, because its expressions remain within the orbit of the community's basic cultural heritage and values. Smith, *Antiquity*, 3-4.

Ethnic Myth

Smith's treatment of myth refers to political myth in particular, that is, myths that serve the purpose of political and ethnic cohesion, having "directive capacity" and "community-creating potency."[50] Smith uses the term *myth* in a "value-neutral sense," signifying not a simple fiction, illusion, or mere legitimation, but a dramatic elaboration growing up around a kernel of historical truth.[51] His basic working definition of myth is "a widely believed tale that legitimates present needs and concerns by reference to a heroic collective past that inspires emulation."[52] Several elements of Smith's definition deserve attention. First, the *form* of the myth is dramatic. Smith writes,

> Myth is very far from being the kind of illusion that it is often conceived to be; nor would we be justified in regarding myths as wholly without factual foundation. … But myth exaggerates, dramatizes and reinterprets facts. It turns the latter into a narrative recounted in dramatic form, and this is part of its wide appeal.[53]

Myth informs social thinking through metaphor,[54] a form that does not easily harmonize with a scientific pursuit of "history." Smith reasons, however, that the form of ethnic myth corresponds with its social function:

> …a kernel of 'historical truth' is decked out with fantasies and half-truths so as to provide a pleasing and coherent 'story' of the ways in which the community was formed and developed. Often, there are variant tales and conflicting stories. Different generations recorded their experiences in alternative accounts using the same epic and poetic forms, the same artistic genres and, even, symbols. The result is a patchwork of myth and legend, and an accretion of materials which requires often painful sifting to arrive at any approximation to a 'scientific' account of communal history. But then the object of this profusion of myth was not scientific 'objectivity', but emotional and aesthetic coherence to undergird social solidarity and social self-definition. … What matters, then, is not the authenticity of the

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[50] Smith, *Origins*, 200.

[51] Smith, *National*, 22; Smith, *Antiquity*, 23.

[52] Smith, *Chosen*, 49, 170. Smith's definition of myth belongs in the category of social-functionalist theories that emphasize the role of myth in defining group identity. This study utilizes Smith's definition of myth throughout, in clear distinction from a narrower form-critical definition. For surveys of the varied understandings of myth employed in biblical studies and their historical development over time, see Robert A. Oden, Jr., *The Bible Without Theology: The Theological Tradition and Alternatives to It* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1987), 40-91; J.W. Rogerson, *Myth in Old Testament Interpretation*, BZAW 134 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1974).

[53] Smith, *Antiquity*, 34.

[54] Ibid., 40.

historical record, much less any attempt at 'objective' methods of historicizing, but the poetic, didactic and integrative purposes which that record is felt to disclose.[55]

This de-emphasizing of "scientific history," while not novel in itself, is significant for clarifying the methodological parameters of this study. Examining sojourn within the category of ethno-mythology as defined by Smith entails attention to the dramatic form of the myth, in the attempt to understand how it serves the function of social solidarity and self-definition. What Smith describes as "painful sifting" in the attempt to construct scientific accounts of communal history cannot be the first order of concern for a study which uses Smith's conceptual frame of reference. Reading Genesis as "ethnic myth," rather, calls for careful attention to the literary art of the ancestral narratives, as they are vital instruments of the power held by the stories to inform and transform the community. This study, therefore, focuses primarily on literary analysis of the Genesis texts, de-emphasizing for the time being questions of scientific history (both of the communities and of the texts in question).

A second important aspect of Smith's understanding of ethnic myth is its role in connecting the present to the past. This connection serves a vital purpose for the community by providing a sense of continuity to collective identity. It also help direct future action. As communities search for a blueprint for the future, the past supplies a model and a base of legitimacy for their actions. Smith expands on these two functions:

> An historical drama that gives us our identities and values, must do two things: it must *define* the entity or unit of which it narrates the drama; and it must *direct* the entity or unit towards a visionary goal. On the one hand, it must supply a history and metaphysic of the community, locating it in time and space among the other communities on the earth; on the other hand, it must generate an ethic and blueprint for the future. The drama which it unfolds must stir us as a collectivity into action for the attainment of communal ends.[56]

This double role of myth provides another useful tool for the analysis of Genesis texts. Smith provides an interpretive framework in which ancestral stories from the past function to ground and direct communal action. This framework allows for an ethical reading of narrative texts. In the field of biblical studies, ethical

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[55] Smith, *Origins*, 25.
[56] Ibid., 182. Emphasis original.

readings of narrative have been fraught with methodological dangers.[57] For this study, temporarily bracketing the theological evaluation of ethical concerns proves a useful exercise. Smith's theory allows for the examination of ethical imperatives urged by the Genesis texts, without an immediate analysis of their relation to natural law, implied law, ancient Near Eastern law, Israel's law, or any other systematic ethical framework. Instead, the ethical directives of the ancestral stories may be interpreted as components of an ethnic myth, and their contribution analyzed within that framework of significance. For this study of sojourn, this means that the ethical action portrayed and urged by the texts is analyzed in terms of its role in constructing ethnic identity. This application of Smith's theory will be most evident in Chapter Four, where sojourn is associated with a number of virtues exemplified by the actions of the patriarchs. The analysis will focus on how these "sojourn virtues" function within the ethnic myth to strengthen collective identity, in accord with Smith's view of the deployment of historical memory for social cohesion and mobilization.

Election

The third relevant aspect of Smith's understanding of ethnic myth concerns the content of the myths themselves. According to Smith the primary element in ethnic myths is that of ancestry or descent, the "*sine qua non* of ethnicity."[58] Members of an ethnic group feel themselves to belong to a large extended "family" related by ties of kinship, a feeling which is mediated by a myth of origin. Myths of origin are "the primary definers of the separate existence and character" of ethnic communities, tracing the time of the community's origins, often to the dawn of time, and mapping the lines of descent from presumed common ancestors.[59] Such myths are key elements in the definition of ethnic communities; as Smith notes, "Not only

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[57] Some scholars have succeeded in charting a balanced approach exploring ethics in narrative. See for example the methods outlined in John Barton, *Understanding Old Testament Ethics: Approaches and Explorations* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2003), 1-11; John Barton, *Ethics and the Old Testament* (London: SCM, 1998), 19-36; Bruce C. Birch, *Let Justice Roll Down: The Old Testament, Ethics, and Christian Life* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991), 51-68; Waldemar Janzen, *Old Testament Ethics: A Paradigmatic Approach* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1994), 26-54; Gordon J. Wenham, *Story as Torah: Reading Old Testament Narrative Ethically* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2000), 1-15.

[58] Smith, *Origins*, 24.

[59] Smith, *Myths*, 15.

have they often played a vital role in differentiating and separating particular *ethnies* from close neighbours and/or competitors; it is in such myths that *ethnies* locate their founding charter and *raison d'être*."[60] Myths of origin are a powerful source of collective dignity and differentiation, as Smith explains,

> …filiation is the basic principle of myth-construction: the chroniclers and poets trace generational lineages and rest their claims for high status and power on a presumed biological link with a hero, a founder, or even a deity. The community, according to this mode of myth-making, is descended from a noble and heroic ancestor, and for that reason is entitled to privilege and prestige in its own and other peoples' estimations.[61]

Smith clarifies once again that it is the perception rather than the fact of filiation that is vital:

> It does not really matter whether the common ancestor or founding father is *mythical* or quasi-historical… What is important about the ancestor myth is the symbolic kinship link between all members of the present generation of the community, and between this generation and all its forebears, down to the common ancestor. …the quest for genealogical roots in family or clan is transposed to the communal level, and thereby becomes symbolic.[62]

Ultimately, "It is fictive descent and putative ancestry that matters for the sense of ethnic identification."[63]

Smith explores a specific category of "myths of origin" which he calls "myths of ethnic election." This powerful cultural resource adds to the myth of origin a sense of chosenness and mission entrusted to a community by the deity.[64] As Smith describes election myths,

> …present actions and situations are explained and legitimated by reference to tales about being chosen by God at a particular moment and place, which may be subsequently repeated and confirmed, thereby inspiring successive generations. Some original act—a promise or miracle, a theophany or a conversion, a founding or simply a (heroic or royal) birth—sets in train, and subsequently inspires and justifies, the conviction of ethnic election, which is then confirmed in subsequent events and/or institutions such as battles, oaths, festivals, sacred texts, and the like. So, the myth of election inspires, not just individuals, but the whole ethnic community to action consonant with

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[60] Smith, *Chosen*, 173.
[61] Smith, *Myths*, 58.
[62] Ibid., 64. Emphasis original.
[63] Smith, *National*, 22.
[64] Smith, *Antiquity*, 19-20.

the message or promise of the original events, as it is reinterpreted by successive generations.[65]

Smith finds myths of ethnic election common in the ancient world,[66] but gives extensive attention to the case of ancient Israel as the *locus classicus* of this category.[67] Smith's treatment focuses on the Mosaic covenant, but his theory is equally applicable to the ancestral narratives in Genesis. In particular, the divine promises to the patriarchs are a powerful crystallization of the ideas in Smith's ethnic myth of election. First, the promises trace the founding of the *ethnie* to a divine theophany which highlights the election of the patriarch be in special relationship with this God. Second, the promises designate the patriarchs as ancestors of an *ethnie*, a people descended from them by birth and thus related by ties of kinship to their founding fathers. Third, the promises include an element of "vision," or "mission," which expresses the special relationship of the *ethnie* to God, and translates this election into a particular way of being in the world, into "action consonant with the message or promise of the original events."[68]

The promise texts of Genesis are a significant context for the appearance of sojourn references. Reading these sojourn texts in the framework of Smith's ethnic theory means focusing on sojourn's connection to ethnic election, which in turn plays a significant role in constructing Israel's ethnic identity. Smith's thought on ethnic election is most prominent in the analysis of Chapter Three, which investigates sojourn references occurring in the promise speeches of Genesis, although it will also influence the analysis at several points in Chapters 2 and 4.

Territoriality

For Smith, an *ethnie* is defined by its ancestry myths but also by its possession or loss of a "homeland," a historic territory.[69] "[E]thnicity is defined, first of all, by a collective belief in common origins and descent, however fictive, and thereafter by shared historical memories associated with a specific territory which

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[65] Smith, *Chosen*, 49.

[66] Smith finds myths of ethnic election in the ancient cultures of the Sumerians, Babylonians, Egyptians, Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Sikhs, Sinhalese, Burmans, Chinese, and Japanese. Anthony D. Smith, "Ethnic Election and National Destiny: Some Religious Origins of Nationalist Ideals," *Nations and Nationalism* 5, no. 3 (1991): 335; Smith, "Culture," 452.

[67] Smith, "Culture," 452.

[68] Smith, *Chosen*, 49.

[69] Smith, *Myths*, 127.

they regard as their 'homeland'."[70] Once again, subjective attachment is far more important than actual possession of the territory in question. Smith observes,

> *Ethnie* do not cease to be *ethnie* when they are dispersed and have lost their homeland; for ethnicity is a matter of myths, memories, values and symbols, and not of material possessions or political power, both of which require a habitat for their realization. … Territory is relevant to ethnicity, therefore, not because it is actually possessed, nor even for its 'objective' characteristics of climate, terrain and location, though they influence ethnic conceptions, but because of an alleged and felt symbiosis between a certain piece of earth and 'its' community. Again, poetic and symbolic qualities possess greater potency than everyday attributes; a land of dreams is far more significant than any actual terrain.[71]

Smith calls the process by which an association forms between the *ethnie* and the land the *territorialization of memory*. This term refers to the process by which a terrain acquires moral and aesthetic significance for a group through the rooting of memories in particular locations, so that the place evokes "a field or zone of powerful and peculiar attachments" by its association with memories handed down through generations of the *ethnie*.[72] The land comes to be viewed as "the unique and indispensable setting of events and experiences that moulded the community."[73] In practice, this connection is achieved by:

> …attaching specific memories of 'our ancestors' and forebears, particularly if they are saintly or heroic, to particular stretches of territory. For example, leaders and educators of the community may locate the deeds of heroes and great men at specific sites, 'poetic spaces' eulogized in the chronicles and ballads recited down the generations, thereby binding their descendants to a distinct landscape endowed with ethno-historical significance. Across the landscape lie the 'sites of memory'; the fields of battle, the monuments to the fallen, the places of peace treaties, the temples of priests, the last resting places of saints and heroes, the sacred groves of spirits and gods who guard the land.[74]

Both man-made and natural features can "locate" the community in a land; "They do so by recalling symbolic crises, dramatic events or turning-points in the history of the community and by endowing it with foci of creative energy."[75] Smith

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[70] Ibid., 208.
[71] Smith, *Origins*, 28. See also Smith, *National*, 22-23.
[72] Smith, *Chosen*, 134-35.
[73] Smith, *Myths*, 269.
[74] Ibid., 151-52.
[75] Smith, *Origins*, 188.

draws special attention to the burial sites of ancestors, which make the land a witness to the survival of the community.[76] Through the final resting-places of communal forebears "the land becomes 'our' territory and the 'eternal home' of our ancestors, an *ancestral homeland...*"[77]

As a location becomes "a repository of historic memories and associations," it is transformed into a historic land, a homeland.[78] Smith terms this landscape, charged with the myths and memories of the ethnic group, a "poetic landscape" or an "ethnoscape." Smith defines ethnoscapes as "landscapes endowed with poetic ethnic meaning through the historicization of nature and the territorialization of ethnic memories;"[79] in them "a sense of kin relatedness and emotional continuity is developed through a chain of generations living, working, dying and being buried in the same historic terrain."[80]

An ethnoscape may acquire additional significance from religious forms of ethnic myths and memories, and so develop into a *sacred* territory. Smith identifies this further religious dimension as both moral and ritual; "the historic homeland becomes sacred partly through the same process of myth-making and shared remembering as occurs in all ethnic communities, but also through the special heroic acts of moral and ritual conduct of a community of believers and its religious heroes."[81] The holiness that attaches to the land derives from two processes. First is the association between holy personages in the past and the particular locales of their exemplary deeds. "So the places where holy men and heroes walked and taught, fought and judged, prayed and died, are felt to be holy themselves; their tombs and monuments became places of veneration and pilgrimage, testifying to the glorious and sacred past of the ethnic community."[82]

Second, the land is associated with the community as a whole and bound to it by the myth of ethnic election. Often the same divine charter which proclaims the election of the *ethnie* grants a particular territory as its homeland; the divine gift legitimates the community's "title-deeds" or land charter.[83] "By regarding the

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[76] Smith, *Myths*, 151.
[77] Ibid., 269. Emphasis original.
[78] Smith, *National*, 9.
[79] Smith, *Myths*, 16.
[80] Ibid., 151.
[81] Ibid., 270.
[82] Ibid., 153.
[83] Smith, "Politics," 712.

homeland as God-given, it ties the elect to a particular terrain. The sacred land and the sanctified soil only are fit for the elect, and they can be redeemed only on the land where their fathers and mothers lived, their heroes fought and their saints prayed."[84] The importance of the election myth was noted above, but its interrelation here with the establishment of a sacred ethnoscape underscores its significance as well as the dynamic relationship between these two core elements of ethnic identity.

Smith's understanding of sacred ethnoscapes offers rich resources for the analysis of sojourn. The processes of territorialization of memory by which the *ethnie* and the land come to be associated are clearly evident in the narratives of Genesis. Ancestral sojourn is a striking part of this process of territorialization, as Chapter Two will show by analysis of itinerary texts in Genesis. The role of the myth of election in the construction of an ethnic homeland will also be a significant element in the discussions of Chapters 2, 3, and 4.

The exposition above has shown how Smith's work provides both theoretical and methodological structure to my investigation of sojourn in Genesis. It remains now to highlight the particular challenge sojourn poses for analysis in terms of Smith's ethnic theory.

Sojourn and Ethnic Myth

Smith's notion of ethnoscapes sets up a correlation between attachment to land and the intensification of ethnic bonds. Strong association of an *ethnie* with a territory, in other words, makes for a powerful and cohesive ethnic myth, which means a strong ethnic identity. If the land of Canaan is Israel's ethnoscape, it is clear from the primary thrust of the Hebrew Bible that Israel develops an intense identity association with this land. In the sojourn theme, however, this connection is curiously de-emphasized. Sojourn downplays the territorial component of Israel's collective identity, stressing instead that the ancestors of Israel originally were, and in some sense continued to be, alienated from the land which was their ethnoscape. The theme of the patriarchs as sojourners in the land poses an interpretive challenge when viewed in comparison with the prominent territorial commitment portrayed in biblical texts.

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[84] Smith, *Myths*, 135.

Smith's conceptual framework both heightens the tension presented by the sojourn theme and also offers resources for its harmonious resolution. On the one hand, sojourn is a problem for ethnic identity. The ethnic ideal is represented by what is authentic, rooted, original, pristine, autochthonous, native, primordial, and ancient.[85] Sojourn, in contrast, represents rootlessness, alienation, dispossession, foreignness, and anxiety. It negates the possibility of a natural, organic connection of Israel to its territory. On the face of it, it would seem that sojourn is completely at odds with Smith's idea of the ethnic territorial myth.

On the other hand, however, Smith's emphasis on ethnic election supplies an interpretive key to the riddle. Sojourn may seem to be at odds with the common patterns of territorial myths, but it accords well with a mythology of ethnic election. While sojourn may appear at some points to weaken Israel's territorial myth, if it serves to buttress its election myth, then its overall contribution to the ethnic myth is positive. Thus an understanding of the varied components of ethnic myth helps illuminate the diverse ways in which sojourn functions, and clarify its helpful role in constructing ethnic identity. Both elements Smith identifies, territoriality and election, are key for the interpretation of sojourn in Genesis. A third aspect discussed above is also instrumental in understanding sojourn: the capacity of the ethnic myth to direct a sustainable future for the *ethnie*, through an emphasis on ethical instruction.

Smith's ethnic theory shapes the methodology of this project as well as its conclusions. In the following exegetical analysis I explore the position of sojourn in the ethnic myth of Israel. My argument is that the portrayal of ancestral sojourn in Genesis contributes to the strength and flexibility of Israel's ethnic identity as portrayed in the Hebrew Bible by buttressing, through a variety of narrative strategies, the central elements of ethnoscape, election, and ethics in Israel's myth of ethnic origin.

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[85] Smith, *Chosen*, 39.

CHAPTER TWO
Mapping an Ethnoscape: Sojourn in the Itinerary Notices

Sojourn occurs six times in Genesis in the format of an itinerary notice. Westermann defines the itinerary genre as a formula of departure, stop, and arrival, which can be interrupted by events occurring at the stopping places.[1] Westermann's basic identification is the working definition of "itinerary" used in this chapter. Itinerary notices report changes of locale for the characters of the narrative. When sojourn occurs in an itinerary notice, it may be used as a verb (√גור) indicating that the character is going or staying somewhere where the character is a stranger (12:10; 20:1; 21:34; 35:27). Alternatively, the location itself may be described using a noun, מָגוֹר, identifying it as a place of sojourn; this noun always occurs in construct form, connected with a genitive pronoun or a noun that indicates the character(s) who experience this location as a place of sojourn (36:7; 37:1).

Sojourn as an itinerary notice occurs three times in reference to Abraham[2] and three times in reference to Jacob (of which one reference includes Esau as well). The first mention of Abraham's sojourn is also the first occurrence of sojourn in the Hebrew Bible. The reference occurs in 12:10 at the start of Abraham's visit to Egypt, designating his time in Egypt as sojourn. The second and third references, 20:1 and 21:34, frame Abraham's time in Gerar, also describing this visit as a time of sojourn. The fourth and sixth occurrences, 35:27 and 37:1, note that Jacob lived in Hebron or Canaan (respectively) and describe these locations as places where his father(s) had sojourned. Between these two references is the fifth occurrence, 36:7, in which the land of Canaan is described as a "land of sojourn" for both Jacob and Esau. Interrelating with these texts are the remaining sojourn references in Genesis which are not itinerary notices, and are thus discussed more fully in other chapters, but which contribute information to the current discussion to the extent that they also function as geographical designations of sojourn locales. These references will be brought into the discussion of the primary references in this chapter as appropriate.

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[1] Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 50 (ET, 57).

[2] As my analysis covers a range of Genesis texts, I will use the name Abraham even when referring to texts that use the name Abram so as to preserve continuity and simplicity in the discussion.

The geographical designations just surveyed display no consistent identification of sojourn with any one location in particular. At times it seems that Canaan is the place of belonging, and departure from it means sojourn, while at others it is emphasized that the experience of the patriarchs within Canaan was one of sojourn. The reversals are heightened in the stories about Jacob, in which the term "land of my fathers" changes its reference point entirely, and Jacob's presence in Canaan is described in ambiguous terms. Some careful exegesis is necessary in order to disentangle the threads of signification in the narrative.

For the sake of clarity, the following analysis discusses each sojourn location separately. First, I address Abraham's sojourn in Egypt and trace the progression of the further visits to Egypt through to the end of Genesis. Next I analyze Abraham's sojourn in Gerar. Last, I look at Paddan-aram as a place of sojourn for Jacob, and its interrelation with Canaan as an ambiguous location signifying both sojourn and belonging.

In discussing each location the analysis will utilize two themes outlined in Chapter One relating to Smith's ethnic myth, the territorialization of memory and the ethnic myth of election. Smith's concept of an ethnoscape (an ethnic homeland) and its formation through the territorialization of memory are best summarized using his own words:

> The term 'homeland' suggests an ancestral territory, one which has become communalized through shared memories of collective experiences. The ancestral land is the place where, in the shared memories of its inhabitants, the great events that formed the nation took place; the place where the heroes, saints and sages of the community from which the nation later developed lived and worked, and the place where the forefathers and mothers are buried. … Memory, then, is bound to place, to a special place, a homeland.[3]

The creation of ethnic memory in the land through the careful use of geographical detail in the stories of the patriarchs, and especially in the itineraries, corresponds closely with Smith's explication of the territorialization of memory. In some of the itinerary notices analyzed below, the narrative illustrates this process clearly and directly. In other instances, however, sojourn presents an interpretive challenge, for sojourn as alienation from the land seems to counter the formation of an ethnoscape. Here the logic of the divine promises (or election myths, in Smith's

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[3] Smith, *Antiquity*, 75.

words) helps clarify the role of sojourn as a contributor to the ethnic myth, and trace its positive contribution to ethnic identity. In this chapter I demonstrate through close analysis of the texts, and the integration of the concepts of territory and election, that sojourn in the itinerary notices plays a strengthening role in Israel's ethnic myth.

Before turning to the textual exegesis, a brief discussion is needed to clarify methodological considerations regarding the itineraries. Treatment of the itinerary notices as significant structural components of the Genesis narratives is not common. An overview of scholarly approaches to the itineraries highlights the reasons for this neglect, and explains why a focus on them is appropriate for this particular study.

The itinerary texts of Genesis have received attention primarily in the context of arguments for the division and dating of Genesis texts. M. Noth classifies the patriarchal itineraries as secondary literary forms used to bind together independent units of tradition.[4] Westermann contends in response that the itineraries reflect migrant life and thus originate at an earlier stage of oral tradition; he assigns them to "the oldest layer" of Gen. 12-50.[5] T. Thompson argues against a historical foundation for the wanderings of the patriarchs, suggesting literary origins for the form instead as either "a traditional folk-tale motif (so, Gen. 12.10), or a secondary editorial technique of linking originally distinct narratives (so, Gen. 13.1f)."[6] These positions all share a classification of itinerary notices as a literary form that is relatively independent from the narratives they accompany.[7] Thus whether these scholars date the itineraries as early or late, they have similar interpretations of the itineraries' function in the text. They tend to describe the itineraries merely as "frameworks,"[8] allowing for the inclusion of variants and new tales;[9] they "give structure" but are on the whole "restricted in importance."[10]

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[4] Noth allows for a few individual exceptions where a short journey may represent an "authentic itinerary" preserving the historical memory of a travel route. In these cases Noth believes the itinerary is independent from the development of narrative material. Martin Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichte des Pentateuch* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlammer, 1948), 237-41 (ET Martin Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions*, trans. Bernhard W. Anderson [Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1972], 220-23).

[5] Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 47 (ET, 55).

[6] Thomas L. Thompson, *The Origin Tradition of Ancient Israel, I: The Literary Formation of Genesis and Exodus 1-23*, JSOTSup, vol. 55 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987), 33.

[7] Coats and G.I. Davies have focused on the "wilderness itineraries;" for them also the itineraries are secondary both in source classification and literary function. George W. Coats, "The Wilderness Itinerary," *CBQ* 34, no. 2 (1972): 147; G.I. Davies, "The Wilderness Itineraries: A Comparative Study," *TynBul* 25 (1974): 78-81.

[8] Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 51 (ET, 57).

[9] Thompson, *Origin*, 112.

[10] Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 49 (ET, 56).

J. Van Seters disputes the separation of itinerary and story, and in doing so opens up the possibility of a more integral role for the itineraries in the narrative. Van Seters cites parallels with mythological sources from the classical world to argue for a genre of ethnographic history in which ancestral travels or wanderings are a central element in the account of national origins.[11] Features this genre shares with the patriarchal stories include the migration of ancestors under divine command to a new region, where they eventually displace the native population and found a civilization.[12] In Van Seters's interpretation, the travels of the heroes are elevated from the status of "redactional seams" to become a part of the stories themselves.[13] One need not share Van Seters's conclusions about the late dating of the Yahwist source in order to benefit from his suggestion that the itinerary notices in Genesis may play a more significant role in the narrative than previously allowed.

Van Seters holds that Westermann's formal separation of the itinerary genre from its accompanying traditions results from a misplaced classification of the patriarchal narratives as "family stories."[14] Van Seters instead finds form-critical justification for the combination of the two forms in one ethnographic genre. I do not attempt in this thesis a thorough form-critical evaluation of the itinerary notices. The brief survey above, however, helps to clarify a few points of method relevant for my analysis.

First, scholars have often relegated itinerary notices in Genesis to a position of secondary literary importance. Since geographical notes may occur at the beginning or end of a narrative episode, and may be "removed" without apparent damage to the fabric of dialogue or action, it is possible to consider them extraneous to a hypothetical narrative core. This type of dissection generally suits the presuppositions and methods of a source-critical approach. It is equally possible (though far less common), however, to interpret the text under the premise that the itinerary notices are integral to the storyline. Van Seters's analysis is an example of a source-critical approach that posits larger units of tradition containing the travel itineraries within them.

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[11] John Van Seters, *Prologue to History: The Yahwist as Historian in Genesis* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992), 209-13.
[12] Ibid., 212.
[13] Ibid., 297.
[14] Ibid., 205.

My own approach to the itinerary notices resembles that of Van Seters in that I hypothesize a significant role for the itineraries in the overall development of major narrative themes. Unlike Van Seters, however, I do not base my reasoning on historical parallels with a specific literary genre. My preference for the elevation of the role of itinerary proceeds, rather, from use of Smith's concept of ethnic myth as a heuristic device for textual interpretation. My logic is as follows. If Genesis is viewed as a text expressing ethnic myth (a designation which pertains to its potential social function rather than a technical literary genre), then the relationship between ancestral figures and their geographical settings in the text are of primary significance. The itinerary notices in Genesis, which chart this relationship between the ancestors and the land, thus demand a significant share of interpretive attention, and the possibility that they may be essentially bound up with the development of the storyline must be seriously entertained. My exegetical analysis of the itinerary notices, however, presupposes neither an early nor a late dating for these itineraries, nor attempts a contribution to form critical discussions of itineraries as a literary genre. These questions are of course not unrelated to my analysis, but they lie outside the boundaries of my central argument. My approach, instead, is an experiment in a certain type of reading which I undertake because of its appropriateness for the interpretation of territorial themes and the payoff it promises in clarifying some of the puzzling aspects of the sojourn texts in the Hebrew bible.

The second question raised by scholars who have worked on the Genesis itineraries is that of historical authenticity. Westermann believes the itinerary notices originate in the migrant lifestyle of the communities among whom the patriarchal tales originated. The function of these itineraries in the text is thus to describe the "history" of these nomadic groups, and even to pass on information about actual nomadic travel routes.[15] Van Seters rejects Westermann's interpretation in favor of a literary rationale for the travel motif, arguing that "…it is the theme of wandering from one distant place to another that explains the nomadic or pastoral mode of life of the patriarchs and not the other way around."[16] N. Gottwald likewise dismisses claims that the Genesis texts convey historical information about patriarchal nomadism, considering the nomadic features of the patriarchal stories a "traditional

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[15] Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 51 (ET, 57).
[16] Van Seters, 200.

motif" used to embroider the theme of "migration as a preparation for religious destiny."[17]

Asking whether the itineraries in Genesis are historical or a literary construction is not directly relevant for the exercise I am undertaking, that is, viewing the texts through the lens of Smith's understanding of ethnic myth. Smith's definition of ethnic myth does not demand the categorization of fact vs. fiction, requiring only that a story be "widely believed."[18] For the purposes of this study, I have bracketed this question of the relationship between the geographical movements of the patriarchs as portrayed in the Hebrew Bible and investigations into the activities of historical communities. I have limited my circle of concern, instead, to the exploration of the itinerary notices in Genesis as elements in a particular ideology of land and identity, or to use Smith's term, as parts of an ethnic myth. I examine the itinerary notices as indicators of a symbolic geography which crystallizes ethnic attachment to particular areas. The question I aim to answer is, how does sojourn, when it is employed as a geographical note within the Genesis narrative material, contribute to Israel's myth of ethnic identity as expressed in the Hebrew Bible? In answering this question, a reading of the itinerary notices as significant elements of the narrative is not only appropriate but indispensable.

Sojourn in Egypt (12:10)

The Abraham cycle opens with a lengthy itinerary section, 11:27-12:9, tracing Abraham's movements from Ur to Haran to Canaan, and then within Canaan from Shechem to Bethel to the Negev.[19] The itinerary concludes with Abraham's departure from Canaan in 12:10, "and Abraham went down to Egypt to sojourn there," at which point the text shifts into a different type of narrative account. The use of the term "sojourn" (לָגוּר) in 12:10 serves both to describe the events that occur thereafter in Egypt as a *sojourn* experience, and to designate Abraham's time in Canaan preceding his departure for Egypt as *not sojourn*. The following analysis

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[17] Norman K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh: A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel, 1250-1050 BCE* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 452-53.

[18] Smith, *Myths*, 135.

[19] See G.J. Wenham's argument against the division of this pericope into subsections, and Westermann's comment that although there are "two introductions" they form one "coherent account." Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, WBC 1 (Waco: Word Books, 1987), 267-68; Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 167 (ET, 145).

first addresses the itinerary section leading up to 12:10 and then the account of the Egypt sojourn which follows 12:10.

A. The Ur-to-Egypt Itinerary (11:27-12:9)

The itinerary in 11:27-12:9 sets up Ur and Haran as the place of origin for Abraham. The larger narrative leading up to the pericope contributes to this geographical symbolism, as the primeval history sets the garden of Eden in the vicinity of Mesopotamia, thus providing a broad backdrop for the patriarchal migration from Ur.[20] The rootedness of the family in Ur is emphasized by the note that it was the land of Haran's birth (11:28).[21] God's call to Abraham in 12:1-3 identifies Abraham's location in Haran as his place of origin and belonging, with the three-fold climactic phrasing, "your land and your birthplace and your father's house" (12:1).[22] God then commands Abraham to leave this place of origin and go to a new land, which might logically be assumed a place of sojourn, in direct contrast to the place of belonging from which Abraham departs. Yet the itinerary takes Abraham from this land of Canaan to another land, Egypt, and it is in this location that Abraham is described as sojourning (12:10). Between the land of origin (Ur/Haran) and the land of sojourn (Egypt) lies Canaan, a land neither of origin nor of sojourn. Where then is Canaan located on the ideological map sketched in the text?[23]

The promise speech in this pericope first presents Canaan as the land which God "will show" Abraham (12:1). The land is at first known only to God, so that Abraham's knowledge of it derives from God's communication to him, and not Abraham's own experience. It is also the location which God commands Abraham to "go to," (12:1) and the place to which he duly travels "as Yahweh had told him" (12:4). Canaan is then, first and foremost, the land to which the patriarchs come at

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[20] E. Theodore Mullen, Jr., *Ethnic Myths and Pentateuchal Foundations: A New Approach to the Formation of the Pentateuch*, SemeiaSt (Atlanta: Scholars, 1997), 101.

[21] בְּאֶרֶץ מוֹלַדְתּוֹ, the land of his kindred or of his birth. See Brown, Driver, and Briggs, 409.

[22] See Alter's reasoning for the translation "birthplace" instead of the usual "kin" here; V.P. Hamilton also argues for "homeland." R.B. Coote and D.R. Ord offer a helpful paraphrase: Abraham is to leave "his secure place within the reproductive and kinship culture of his homeland." Alter, *Genesis*, 50; Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1990), 369-71; Robert B. Coote and David Robert Ord, *The Bible's First History* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 102.

[23] I borrow from F.V. Greifenhagen the term "ideological map," indicating geography that "takes into account the symbolic meanings of place" and thus describes "cultural values or ideologies." F.V. Greifenhagen, *Egypt on the Pentateuch's Ideological Map: Constructing Biblical Israel's Identity*, JSOTSup 361 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 6, 22.

the command of the deity; their experience there is dependant upon their communication and relationship with their God.

Smith discusses examples of *ethnies* with migration histories that couple two different locations within their ethnic myths, a "land of history" and a "land of destiny."[24] The category "land of destiny" represents a soil for the creative genius of a people, a place where a people may realize themselves.[25] The term is helpful in understanding the depiction of Canaan here. God's call to Abraham to go to a new land is coupled with the promise that he will make him into a great nation (12:2); that is, a larger communal entity will trace its origin to Abraham. The new land and the new nation go together; it is in this land that Abraham's wider significance as the father of a nation will be realized.[26] In this sense Canaan is a land of destiny, for it is the location chosen by the divine for the establishment of this nation. Here in the divine charter Abraham becomes the founder and ancestor of an *ethnie,* and the land of Canaan is appointed as the ethnoscape in which the destiny of this *ethnie* will be realized.

On this ideological map, then, Canaan stands in contrast with Egypt, the place of sojourn. Egypt is not the land allotted by divine charter to Abraham; it is not the land where ethnic destiny is to be fulfilled. In this sense Abraham belongs in Canaan, whereas in Egypt he only "sojourns." The itinerary section gives further content to this contrast with the details it provides about Abraham's activities in Canaan.

Abraham's actions as he moves through Canaan are not expressive of possession or an attempt to gain control. The text also emphasizes that the Canaanites were present in the land at that time (12:6). R. Cohn highlights the power dynamic reflected in this statement:

> These early gentle reminders establish the basis for the relationship between natives and ancestors: the natives have power and the ancestors have none. … Although God repeatedly promises the land to the descendants of Abraham, for the present, the Canaanites control the land on which the ancestors must tread softly.[27]

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[24] Smith, *Chosen*, 137; Smith, *Origins*, 183-85, 267 n. 27.

[25] Smith, *Myths*, 127.

[26] Wenham observes that the land promise is implicit in the promise to make Abraham into a great nation, as a large territory is part of what makes a nation great; E.A. Speiser also notes that the term גוי requires a territorial base. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 275; E.A. Speiser, "'People' and 'Nation' of Israel," *JBL* 79, no. 2 (1960): 163; E.A. Speiser, *Genesis: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 86.

[27] Robert L. Cohn, "Before Israel: The Canaanites as Other in Biblical Tradition," in *The Other in Jewish Thought and History: Constructions of Jewish Culture and Identity*, ed. Laurence J. Silberstein

The fact of Canaanite control, however, does not seem to carry negative overtones at this point in the narrative. Two realities are directly juxtaposed in vv. 6-7: the Canaanites are in the land, and God promises Abraham that his offspring will receive that same land. The text does not communicate anxiety about this juxtaposition, or strain to elucidate that the promised Israelite possession will entail a corresponding dispossession of the Canaanites. Abraham's presence in the land does not seem, at this point, to be at odds with the Canaanite presence there.

Abraham's itinerary moves from the North of Canaan (Shechem) to its middle (Bethel) and then to its Southern region (the Negev). He thus moves across the expanse of the land of Canaan, doing nothing more, apparently, than establishing his presence there before moving on. Viewed from the theological standpoint of promise and fulfillment, this text poses a challenge: why is the promise of land possession not immediately fulfilled?[28] From this viewpoint, Abraham's wanderings are just marking time; they have no value as progress toward fulfillment of the promise, except perhaps as a faint symbolic foreshadowing of that glorious future.[29] Viewed as part of an ethnic myth, however, Abraham's actions are a logical part of the construction of an ethnoscape. Abraham does not wander about because he has no home in Canaan;[30] rather, his wide-ranging journey is the very process by which Canaan as a whole is claimed and made into a home. His movements are purposeful and significant; they are also effective in accomplishing a goal. This goal is the transformation of Canaan into an ethnoscape for Abraham's descendants, "a storied landscape," through the establishing of memory in the land .[31] On this point Smith observes,

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and Robert L. Cohn, New Perspectives in Jewish Studies (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 79.

[28] D.J.A. Clines, for example, finds Abraham's itinerary in chs. 12-13 a dramatic illustration that the promise at this point is still "no more than a promise." Abraham arrives in the land only to walk "straight through it and out the other side," with discouraging portents like Canaanites and famine marking the journey. When viewed solely through the lens of possession as fulfillment, the picture here looks rather bleak. See David J.A. Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch*, JSOTSup 10 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1978), 46.

[29] U. Cassuto believes this text is a symbolic forecast of future possession, and links Abraham's specific stopping-points (as well as Jacob's later in the narrative) to key points seized during the conquest in the times of Joshua. My interpretation, by contrast, seeks to find value inherent in Abraham's actions themselves, rather than defining their significance primarily as a prefiguring of later events. See U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis: Part II, From Noah to Abraham* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1964), 304-06.

[30] As claimed by J. Calvin. John Calvin, *Genesis*, Crossway Classic Commentaries (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2001), 124.

[31] Habel, 119.

> A 'historic land' is one where terrain and people have exerted mutual, and beneficial, influence over several generations. The homeland becomes a repository of historic memories and associations, the place where 'our' sages, saints and heroes lived, worked, prayed and fought. All this makes the homeland unique.[32]

In Smith's understanding, the establishment of past memory in the land is as important an element in forming a homeland as the establishment of legal entitlement. Ethnoscapes are made authentic not only by formal legitimation (i.e. record of possession), but also by a sense of an ethnic history that has unfolded in the location which the *ethnie* claims as its own. Smith stresses, "ethnicity is a matter of myths, memories, values and symbols, and not of material possessions or political power."[33] Hence, "what is crucial for ethnicity is not the possession of the homeland, but the sense of mutual belonging…."[34] For Canaan to be Israel's own land it is important, then, for its first ancestor Abraham to *simply have been present* at various important sites in the land.[35]

Abraham moves through the land performing actions that harmonize with the ethnic myth set in motion by the divine promise, and that actualize the ethnic claim to the territory God has promised to this *ethnie*, his descendants. In the framework of ethnic myth the itinerary notice takes on meaning in its own right, as its stands in the text, without the need for the widespread additional conjecture that Abraham canvassed the land in an act of legal possession.[36] It is not necessary for Abraham to

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[32] Smith, *National*, 9.

[33] Smith, *Origins*, 28.

[34] Anthony D. Smith, "The Ethnic Sources of Nationalism," *Survival* 35, no. 1 (1993): 51.

[35] It is perhaps not the specific sites that are significant as much as their number and variety; i.e., that Abraham established ethnic memory at several points across the stretch of the land. Ethnic memory demands a somewhat broad territorial claim, necessitating a regional rather than a fixed-point focus for the ancestral myths. Thus Abraham's movement itself becomes important, so that his peregrinations in the land are not simply the means of arriving at particular sites of significance, but rather an integral part of the wide-ranging claim of the narrative.

[36] Many authors claim that Abraham's movements across the land (especially in 13:17) have legal significance as a land claim. The suggestion is plausible, but a meaningful interpretation of Abraham's itinerary does not depend upon it, and is arguably stronger without it. See Alter, *Genesis*, 57; Cassuto, 323; David Daube, *Studies in Biblical Law* (Cambridge: University Press, 1947), 37-39; Robert Davidson, *Genesis 12-50*, CBC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 29-30; Terence E. Fretheim, "The Book of Genesis," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck et al. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 434; Habel, 118-19; E. Lipiński and Heinz-Josef Fabry, "נָתַן," in *ThWAT*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1986), 704 (ET E. Lipiński and Heinz-Josef Fabry, "נָתַן," in *TDOT*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999], 100); Nahum M. Sarna, *Understanding Genesis* (New York: Schocken Books, 1966), 104; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 281, 298; Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 211 (ET, 180).

stake a legal claim to the land in passing through it, excepting the claim of memory. The power of this memory is enough, however, to establish Canaan as a site of belonging, against which Egypt is already denoted a site of sojourn.

In both Shechem and Bethel, Abraham builds altars to Yahweh (12:7, 8). He builds no altars in the Negev or during his sojourn in Egypt, but on returning he moves his tent to Hebron and builds an altar there (13:18). Some scholars interpret the building of altars as a claim to the land, although reflection about the mechanism of this claim is generally limited to the brief labeling of the action as "symbolic."[37] Wenham provides more detailed reflection in this vein, interpreting the altar-building as "an acted prophecy" foreshadowing future worship of Israel in the land.[38] Westermann believes the altars were temporary memorials appropriate to the nomadic lifestyle of the patriarchs, and remain in the text as a historical record legitimizing alternative forms of worship for Israel.[39] Another view links the altars to the institution of later cultic centers.[40] Clearly a range of symbolic significance can be suggested, with various interpretations regarding the relationship between patriarchal worship and later forms of worship in Israel.[41]

Setting aside questions of early and late forms of worship, we may further refine the suggestions above that Abraham's acts of worship are connected with Israel's life in the land and its claim upon it. It is clear that Abraham's altar building connects him with locations significant for the future *ethnie* that claimed him as their ancestor.[42] Abraham's actions at these locations—building altars and calling on the

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[37] Clare Amos, *The Book of Genesis*, Epworth Commentaries (Peterborough: Epworth, 2004), 78; J. Gerald Janzen, *Abraham and All the Families of the Earth: A Commentary on the Book of Genesis 12-50*, ITC (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1993), 22; Augustine Pagolu, *The Religion of the Patriarchs*, JSOTSup, vol. 277 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 54; John J. Scullion, *Genesis: A Commentary for Students, Teachers, and Preachers*, OTS 6 (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1992), 109; Skinner, 245-46.

[38] Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 283.

[39] Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 182-83 (ET, 156-57).

[40] Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis übersetzt und erklärt*, 8th ed., Göttinger Handkommentar zum Alten Testament 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969), 167 (ET Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis*, trans. Mark E. Biddle, Mercer Library of Biblical Studies [Macon: Mercer University Press, 1997], 166-67); Hiebert, 107-09; Pagolu, 60; Bruce Vawter, *On Genesis: A New Reading* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1977), 176-78.

[41] See A. Pagolu's discussion on the contrast between patriarchal forms of worship and Deuteronomic regulations, and his review of various positions regarding the portrayal of patriarchal worship in Genesis. Pagolu, 23-31.

[42] Van Seters points out the significance of the specific links to Shechem and Hebron as ancient centers of the two kingdoms. That *both* sites are identified with Abraham shows the emphasis of this narrative on a broad claim of ethnic memory in the region, rather than focused identification with particular sites to the exclusion of others. R. Albertz finds in this itinerary a conciliatory agenda

name of Yahweh—suggest at the very minimum worship of the divinity to whom this *ethnie* traced its founding charter. More elaborate interpretations addressing the forms and locations of Abraham's worship are not needed for understanding the pericope, as Abraham's acts of worship appropriately develop its central theme, the establishment of an ethnoscape. The acts of altar-building, in particular, define the ethnoscape specifically as a *sacred* ethnoscape. Smith observes, "…the places where holy men and heroes walked and taught, fought and judged, prayed and died, are felt to be holy themselves."[43] Abraham's acts of piety inscribe another layer of memory in the ethnic territory: Canaan is now the land where the ancestors responded to God in worship, at particular sites of memory distributed throughout the land. Smith writes of religious heroes, "It is the memory of their example in moments of revelation and crisis that creates a special bond of holiness between the community and its homeland…"[44] Abraham as an ancestral hero does not only establish memory in the land, but establishes memory of a specific kind—memory that points back again to a relationship with the divinity that elected the *ethnie*, and that granted it its land. The cultic actions of Abraham present a puzzle for strictly religious interpretation, but are perfectly consonant with a broader understanding of ethnic myth. Abraham's sweeping itinerary claims Canaan as the land of Israel's memory, and the altars he builds identify the land as a homeland that is granted by God, marked by sites commemorating this divine charter.

Canaan is portrayed in the itinerary pericope as the land of divine grant and ancestral history. The subsequent sojourn in Egypt, placed in juxtaposition with the time in Canaan described here, occupies the position of a negative counterpart on the ideological map of the text. The structure of the itinerary section further supports the establishment of Canaan as Israel's ethnoscape and of Egypt as its foil. Tracking the place names as they appear in order in the text, the movements of Abraham and his family including the itinerary after their return from Egypt may be charted as follows:

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embracing both northern and southern traditions equally. See John Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), 224-25; Van Seters, *Prologue*, 247, 252; Rainer Albertz, *Die Exilszeit: 6. Jahrhundert v. Chr.*, Biblische Enzyklopädie 7 (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 2001), 199-200 (ET Rainer Albertz, *Israel in Exile: The History and Literature of the Sixth Century B.C.E.*, trans. David Green, SBLStBl 3 [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003], 258).

[43] Smith, *Myths*, 153.

[44] Ibid., 270.

Ur (11:28, 31) → Haran (11:31; 12:4)→ Canaan (12:5)[45]

→ Shechem (12:6)

→ Bethel and Ai (12:8)

→ the Negev (12:9)

→ Egypt (12:10)

→ the Negev (13:1)

→ Bethel and Ai (13:3)

→ Hebron (13:8)

Two types of movement appear in this diagram. The first is linear, starting with the departure from Ur and ending with the arrival in Canaan. The second is circular, [46] beginning within Canaan, progressing to Egypt, then returning to Canaan. [47] In the first sequence, Canaan is the destination and the end point of the journey, set up in the text (12:5) as the place which Abraham's family aims for and the place in which they arrive. The rhythmic repetition of "the land of Canaan" emphasizes its importance as both the intended destination and the actual point of arrival:

And they set out to go to the land of Canaan, וַיֵּצְאוּ לָלֶכֶת אַרְצָה כְּנַעַן

and they came to the land of Canaan וַיָּבֹאוּ אַרְצָה כְּנָעַן

Abraham goes to Canaan with all the persons and possessions belonging to his household (12:5), leaving nothing behind to attract him back. [48] The forward momentum of this journey, fuelled by the impulse of the divine command (12:1-3), is

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[45] Canaan is also mentioned as the intended destination of Terah in 11:31, but it is not yet an actual stopping point on the itinerary.

[46] The argument for symmetry is weakened by the dissimilarity between Shechem and Hebron, but charting an overall circular motion is still justifiable on the grounds that the two locations are still within Canaan. J.J. Scullion plots a concentric structure that is similar, but begins and ends at Bethel and Ai. Scullion, 112.

[47] Westermann observes a broad distinction between two types of itinerary in the patriarchal stories which correspond to the two types outlined above, that of journey, and that of departure and return. He attributes the difference in form, however, to a historical shift from a migrant style of life to a sedentary one. Westermann's explanation does not account for the close juxtaposition of the two patterns of movement in chs. 12 and 13. My reading accounts for the difference more satisfactorily by focusing on the literary function of the itineraries within the narrative. Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 51, 496-97 (ET, 58, 407).

[48] Although Abraham never returns, his servant does at his commission, as does his grandson Jacob. The later visits to Haran/Paddan-aram will be discussed further on in this study.

directed entirely toward Canaan. This trajectory accords with the establishment of Canaan as the location of ethnic "destiny."

Once Abraham has arrived in Canaan, however, his movements take on a new shape. His itinerary follows a symmetrical out-and-back loop, traveling to Egypt and then back in a series of carefully reversed stages. The place names mirror one another as shown in the diagram above, but the verbs of movement and other vocabulary also contribute to a symmetrical structure of departure and return, portrayed in the diagram below. In the itineraries framing the Egypt story (12:8-9; 13:3-4) this symmetry is achieved by direct mirroring, as can be seen in the pairs A-A' and B-B'. Within the Egypt story itself (12:10-13:1), antonyms are used to set up a symmetry of contrast as Abraham moves toward the climax of the plot and then reverses direction to move in the opposite direction (C-C', D-D', E-E', and F-F').

12:8	A	וַיִּקְרָא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה	tent & altar at Bethel; Abram called on the name of Yahweh
12:9	B	וַיִּסַּע אַבְרָם הָלוֹךְ וְנָסוֹעַ	journeyed by stages (נסע√ and הלך√)
12:10	C	וַיֵּרֶד אַבְרָם מִצְרַיְמָה	Abram went down to Egypt
12:14	D	כְּבוֹא	entered
12:15	E	וַתֻּקַּח הָאִשָּׁה	the woman was taken
12:16	F	הֵיטִיב	dealt well with
12:17	F'	וַיְנַגַּע	afflicted
12:19	E'	אִשְׁתְּךָ קַח	take your woman
12:20	D'	וַיְשַׁלְּחוּ	sent away
13:1	C'	וַיַּעַל אַבְרָם מִמִּצְרַיִם	Abram went up from Egypt
13:3	B'	וַיֵּלֶךְ לְמַסָּעָיו	journeyed by stages (נסע√ and הלך√)
13:3-4	A'	וַיִּקְרָא...בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה	tent & altar at Bethel; Abram called on the name of Yahweh

When Abraham returns to Bethel, the narrative stresses that it was the place where he had been *at the beginning* (בַּתְּחִלָּה), and where he had made an altar *at the first* (בָּרִאשֹׁנָה) (13:3-4). G. Janzen observes, "Abraham's arrival at Bethel has the character of a return and a recognition… The strange has begun to become familiar."[49] Abraham's journey to Egypt traces a loop which lands him back where he started, in Canaan, his original destination and destiny. This carefully charted circuit away from Canaan and back serves to place Canaan squarely in the center of the ideological map. Egypt, in contrast, is located on the ideological periphery—it is

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[49] Janzen, *Abraham*, 28.

not a destination, but a place to which Abraham goes and from which he then returns to Canaan, the center. Sojourn in Egypt, then, is quite decidedly temporary. The journey to Egypt is emphatically reversed with a journey back to Canaan; sojourn outside the land resolves into belonging within it. The reference to sojourn in this itinerary pericope contributes to the construction of an ethnoscape, Canaan the land of promise, to which Egypt, the land of sojourn, is the negative counterpart.

B. The Sojourn in Egypt (12:10-13:1)[50]

This first instance of sojourn sets up a pattern that gains heightened significance as the narrative progresses. When Abraham sojourns in Egypt, the verb accompanying the reference to sojourn is "he went down," וַיֵּרֶד (12:10). The story ends with an antonym denoting the reverse movement, "he went up," וַיַּעַל (13:1).[51] Elsewhere in Genesis as it is here, sojourn in Egypt is clearly bracketed on either side with antonyms denoting descent and ascent.[52] The first visit of Joseph's brothers to Egypt opens with "they went down," וַיֵּרְדוּ (42:3) and closes with the less-precise mirror word, "they departed," וַיֵּלְכוּ (42:26). In later re-tellings of the visit, however, the descent is once again described by "we went down," יָרַדְנוּ (43:20) and the ascent by "we went up," עָלִינוּ (44:24). The brothers' second visit is clearly bracketed with the verbs "went down," וַיֵּרְדוּ (43:15) and "went up," וַיַּעֲלוּ (45:25). Much anxiety surrounds the "going down," (ירד√) of Benjamin to Egypt (42:38; 43:4, 5, 7; 44:21, 23, 26) with the urgent need that he complete the circuit and "go up" (עלה√) from Egypt (44:33, 34).[53] When Jacob enters Egypt, God assures him that he will "go down" and will also "come up," using the same verbs, √ירד and √עלה (46:3-4).

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[50] The end point of the Egypt pericope is a matter of debate. The majority view places it at 12:20, but there is support for extending the pericope to include the itinerary notices following it, either to 13:1 or 13:4. I include 13:1 in my analysis of the pericope because of its symmetry with 12:10. For a summary of views see Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 285-86.

[51] The verbs √ירד and √עלה are apt for describing a journey traversing elevation changes between mountainous Canaan and the Nile valley in Egypt, although G.R. Driver has also shown the verbs may be used to indicate movement in the direction of the south and north respectively, and S. Shibayama raises the possibility of association with directions of flow in the Jordan River and the Nile. G.R. Driver, "On עלה 'Went up Country' and ירד 'Went down Country'," *ZAW* 69 (1957): 76; Sakae Shibayama, "Notes on Yārad and 'Ālāh: Hints on Translating," *JBR* 34, no. 4 (1966): 359 n. 4, 361.

[52] While the terminology of sojourn is not used in the itinerary notices of the Joseph story, this time in Egypt is described as sojourn in the dialogue with Pharaoh in 47:4.

[53] If Benjamin does not return, Jacob will die of grief, expressed in the text as "going down" (ירד√) to Sheol (42:38; 44:29, 31), a descent with no return. The overall Joseph narrative sets up several literary patterns of descent and ascent paralleling the "going down" and "coming up" to and from Egypt, such as the pit in Dothan and the several instances of jailing. In all these places, a descent with no chance of ascent threatens death. B. Green points out, however, that the story reveals these

For Joseph himself the textual parenthesis opens in 39:1, where the phrase echoes the descent of Abraham into Egypt:

12:10 וַיֵּרֶד אַבְרָם מִצְרַיְמָה And Abraham went down to Egypt

39:1 וְיוֹסֵף הוּרַד מִצְרָיְמָה And Joseph was brought down to Egypt

The difference is in the form of the verb "go down," which takes the passive hophal form in Joseph's case, as he was taken to Egypt by others and not of his own volition. In keeping with the opening bracket of this sojourn episode, the closing bracket "go up" takes the hiphil form (וְהֶעֱלָה אֶתְכֶם), the subject being God himself: "God will surely come to you and will bring you up from this land" (50:24).[54] It is God who brings about the closure of the narrative loop and the termination of sojourn. Yet in the narrative, this "coming up" is only a future event predicted by Joseph, not a narrative report of past occurrence. The predictive speech is only a suggestion of the actual event for which the text has set up an expectation. Thus the loop of sojourn, formerly closed again and again by explicit textual mirroring, is in this case left conspicuously open. The book of Genesis ends on a cliffhanger, as it were, its closing word placing the Israelites still squarely in the midst of their sojourn experience, "in Egypt," בְּמִצְרָיִם (50:26).[55] Only beyond Genesis will the awaited ascent from Egypt be realized, when √עלה becomes "the exodus verb,"[56] and the tradition quotes Joseph's charge verbatim as Moses fulfills the prediction and takes Joseph's bones from Egypt to Canaan (Ex. 13:19; cf. Gen. 50:25).

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locations to be safe places that actually protect the characters from death. D.A. Seybold also reflects on the paradoxical life-preserving role of these "pits." This interpretation of the family's stay in Egypt is consonant with the larger portrayal of sojourn as a negative experience, which is re-defined by a larger framework of significance in order to become a positive element of Israelite identity. See Barbara Green, *"What Profit for Us?": Remembering the Story of Joseph* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1996), 14; Donald A. Seybold, "Paradox and Symmetry in the Joseph Narrative," in *Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives* ed. Kenneth R.R. Gros Louis, James S. Ackerman, and Thayer S. Warshaw (Nashville: Abingdon, 1974), 61-65, 70.

[54] Joseph also makes his brothers swear that they will "bring up," וְהַעֲלִתֶם (50:25) his bones from Egypt to Canaan.

[55] Clines traces an overall movement progressing through the Pentateuch, set in motion by the initial land promise to the fathers. He notes that the ending of Genesis does not provide closure to this movement. Clines's argument is more general, however, and does not utilize the itinerary notices or sojourn references. Green's analysis gives closer attention to positional elements in the narrative, highlighting motion "up" and "down," and placing a strong emphasis on the suspension of the pattern at the story's end. Likewise, however, Green makes no note of sojourn's role in this pattern. Clines, 25; Green, 14, 178-92.

[56] This is Coats' term. Westermann notes that the phrase "bring up from the land" is used 42 times to describe the rescue of Israel from Egypt. See George W. Coats, *From Canaan to Egypt: Structural and Theological Context for the Joseph Story*, CBQMS 4 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1976), 18; Westermann, *Genesis: 3*, 236 (ET, 209).

As discussed above, the first incidence of sojourn and return establishes Canaan as the homeland, the ethnoscape in which destiny is realized. The subsequent repetitions of this pattern and its dramatic suspension at the close of Genesis make a further contribution to the ethnic myth. The final return from sojourn which the narrative structure demands is the return that will occur in the exodus, a second significant component of Israel's ethnic myth. The sojourn itineraries in Genesis set the scene for this defining event on several levels.

First, the text establishes that the final return of the people to Canaan will be a "homecoming," a return to a land inscribed with ethnic significance. As Thompson states, "the patriarchal narratives have as one of their functions that of explicating in story the perception that the Israel which came out of Egypt was coming back *home,* to the land given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the very beginning by God himself."[57] The narrative has established Canaan as the site of divine promise and sacred ancestral memory, in contrast with sojourn in Egypt. This occurs, as we have seen, through the structure of the patriarchal itineraries in Canaan and Egypt.

Second, the repetition of the sojourn-and-return pattern shows that in returning to Canaan from sojourn in Egypt, the Israelites repeat the pattern of history and walk in the footsteps of Abraham, Jacob, and Jacob's sons, their ethnic fathers.[58] This association of the exodus with the acts of the ancestors strengthens ethnic identification by attaching to the return from Egypt a sense of continuity between past and present. The territorialization of memory thus occurs not only in the movements of the patriarchs within Canaan, but also in the pattern of their repeated return from sojourn.[59]

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[57] Thompson, *Origin*, 33.

[58] Greifenhagen describes Abraham's movements as a "proto-exodus," the proleptic enactment of a master narrative promoted by the Pentateuch. He argues, however, that this master narrative is concerned with the establishment of Israel's origins in Mesopotamia rather than Egypt. He thus casts the cyclical repetition of out-and-back movement as an ideological construct subverting the notion of Israelite origin in Egypt. It lies beyond the bounds of this study to closely evaluate Greifenhagen's proposal regarding the origins of Israel and their ideological representation (or subversion) in the text. It may be observed, however, that highlighting the category of sojourn within the structure of the Genesis itineraries reveals closer similarities between the patriarchal visits to Egypt and to Mesopotamia than Greifenhagen allows, and also focuses attention on the ideological construction of Canaan as an ethnic homeland, a process unexamined in Greifenhagen's work. That said, the theoretical approach of Greifenhagen's work and my own are very similar. See Greifenhagen, 10-11, 30, 256-60; F.V. Greifenhagen, "Ethnicity In, With, or Under the Pentateuch," *Journal of Religion and Society* 3 (2001): 1-17.

[59] Several authors enumerate further narrative details in the story of Abraham's sojourn in Egypt that prefigure the story of the Exodus, underscoring the parallel. Alter, *Genesis*, 52; Cassuto, 334-36; Fretheim, 429-33; Gunkel, *Genesis*, 173 (ET, 172); Janzen, *Abraham*, 26-27; R.W.L. Moberly,

Third, through the pattern of sojourn the narrative sets up the land promise and the exodus as two connected components of the central ethnic myth. Genesis portrays sojourn in Egypt as a temporary state of alienation, the opposite pole to the divine promise of belonging in Canaan, then shows that the same God who originally grants the land also guarantees the termination of this sojourn outside it. This correlation is strongest in the promise speech of ch. 15. There Yahweh promises Abraham the possession of Canaan (15:7), then foretells the sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt, כִּי־גֵר יִהְיֶה זַרְעֲךָ (15:13), and also promises they will "come back here" out of sojourn after the fourth generation (15:16). Here in Genesis, then, an additional significant element of the ethnic myth is put into place: the divine impulse behind the exodus event. Genesis shows that the will of Yahweh is behind both the *original* journey to Canaan from the land of *origin*, and the *later* return to Canaan once again from the land of *sojourn*.[60] Both ethnic migrations are directed toward Canaan, the divinely appointed ethnoscape. As we have seen, references to sojourn help to define both the divine land promise and the exodus event. Ultimately, sojourn serves to clarify the ideological map underlying both these central components of the ethnic myth.

In all three textual moves above, sojourn in Egypt is unequivocally the negative counterpart to divinely sanctioned belonging in the land of Canaan. Smith's explanation of how an ethnoscape is created illuminates the workings of the texts and the layout of the resulting ideological map. Thus the first reference to sojourn in Genesis plays an important part in the construction of Israel's ethnoscape by setting up a center-periphery relationship between Canaan and Egypt. This equation is soon problematized, however, by subsequent references which locate patriarchal sojourn *within* Canaan, and suggest a positive valuation for the sojourn experience itself. We turn now to the next sojourn reference.

Genesis 12-50, OTG (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 72; John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 142. Wenham also finds imagery reminiscent of Israel's wilderness itinerary in ch. 13, as Abraham and Lot return from Egypt to Canaan. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 300.

[60] The text of ch. 15 explicitly situates both events in the framework of the divine will: God states that he has brought Abraham out of Ur (v. 7), and that he will bring judgment upon Egypt so that Abraham's offspring will come out of it (v. 14). Further discussion of this text follows in Chapter Three.

Sojourn in Gerar (20:1; 21:34)

Abraham's sojourn in Gerar is demarcated at its beginning and end by two itinerary notices, both of which use the term "he sojourned," וַיָּגָר (20:1; 21:34).[61] The opening itinerary notice (20:1) sets Abraham's location in sequence with previous locations. Abraham's starting point is simply "from there," מִשָּׁם, with no immediate antecedent.[62] In the larger narrative leading up to this point, however, the last specific location mentioned for Abraham was the oaks of Mamre (18:1). When Abraham leaves this location to overlook Sodom and then comes back to it, the text says he returned "to his place," לִמְקֹמוֹ (18:33).[63] This location had also been the termination point of the earlier itinerary in 13:18. The oaks of Mamre at Hebron are positioned as a central point, then, from which Abraham now sets out on another loop of sojourn to Gerar. This loop will not be completed until the return to Machpelah, east of Mamre (ch. 23), when Abraham purchases land there for Sarah's burial.[64]

To describe Abraham's movement, the itinerary uses the same root used in the itineraries of chs. 12 and 13, "he journeyed by stages," וַיִּסַּע. Here as in 12:9 and 13:3, the area associated with the verb is the Negev. The itinerary then reports that Abraham sojourned (וַיָּגָר) in Gerar (20:1). The phrase "he sojourned in Gerar," בִּגְרָר וַיָּגָר, is accented by paronomasia; C. Amos observes that the word play highlights the importance of Abraham's alien status in the story.[65] Is this sojourn of Abraham's conceptually similar to his sojourn in Egypt, a temporary departure from Canaan that stands in contrast to existence within the divinely-appointed homeland?

Gerar's geographical location near Gaza places it in an indistinct borderland category in relation to the promised land. Gen. 10:19 describes "the territory of the

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[61] Another sojourn reference occurs in the midst of the narrative in 21:23. Since it is not an itinerary notice, its analysis is deferred until ch. 4. At this point it may be noted, however, that 21:23 further accents Abraham's experience in all of chs. 20-21 as one of sojourn.

[62] Scullion and Westermann note that this is a stereotyped formula, and conclude there is no way to know where "there" refers to. Scullion, 163; Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 391 (ET, 320).

[63] The translation "home" is appropriate, as in 30:25 for Jacob and 32:1 for Laban. See Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, WBC 2 (Dallas: Word Books, 1994), 254.

[64] Within the larger loop the narrative also places a meticulously charted circuit of departure to and return from Moriah in ch. 22; there the centre anchoring the loop seems to be Beer-sheba.

[65] Amos, 111-12.

Canaanites" as extending "in the direction of Gerar as far as Gaza," designating Gerar as a location at or near the border of Canaan. Gen. 20:34 describes Gerar as "the land of the Philistines."[66] The text suggests that Gerar differs from Canaan in the name of the host people who occupy the area. In both territories, however, Abraham is described as moving through a land where a people already resides (12:6; 13:7; 20:34). It is not clear whether Gerar is clearly differentiated from Canaan or not. Gerar's designation as a place of sojourn could be in contrast with Canaan as a place of belonging, or in contrast with Ur/Haran as the land of origin (i.e., Abraham's sojourn in Gerar would be a part of and/or analogous to an overall sojourn in Canaan[67]). At this point in the Genesis narrative, the position of Gerar on the text's ideological map is somewhat ambiguous.[68] Greifenhagen describes it as "liminal or transitional."[69]

While the text does not communicate a clear picture of Gerar's geographical significance, it does strongly identify Abraham's experience there as one of sojourn. Smith's thought on the territorialization of memory is therefore less relevant for our interpretation here, but other aspects of the text are relevant for an understanding of sojourn's role in the ethnic myth. Rather than symbolic geography, then, we turn our attention to the qualitative experience of Abraham during his time of sojourn. The itinerary notices on either side of this period form an *inclusio* by repeating the verb "he sojourned," וַיָּ֫גָר (20:1; 21:34). The geographic notes bracket chs. 20 and 21 together as a unit, which exhibits the following broad structure:[70]

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[66] The reference to Philistines here (as well as in 26:1) is a widely-noted anachronism. T.E. Fretheim and Van Seters argue for a symbolic usage of the term to represent non-Israelite (or non-religious) inhabitants of the land. The likeliest and most common interpretation, supported by Alter, Driver, Speiser, G. von Rad, and Wenham, is that it is a proleptic expression used because it described the area at a later time (i.e. that of writing). Hamilton argues that the text correctly refers to an early group from the Aegean, and also provides a bibliography for the discussion as a whole. Fretheim, 249; Van Seters, *Abraham*, 178; Alter, *Genesis*, 102; S.R. Driver, *The Book of Genesis: With Introduction and Notes*, 6th ed., WC (London: Methuen, 1907), 215; Speiser, *Genesis*, 200; von Rad, *Genesis*, 236 (ET, 266); Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 94; Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18-50*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1995), 94.

[67] While the idea of sojourn in Canaan has not yet been introduced by the itinerary notices, it will be in the next reference discussed below; the promise speeches have also introduced this concept prior to ch. 20 in the sojourn reference of 17:8.

[68] Gerar is discussed further in the analysis of 26:3 in Chapter Three.

[69] Greifenhagen, *Egypt*, 31.

[70] Coats argues for the unity of chs. 20-21 based on shared setting, themes, and characters, and highlights the bracketing function of 20:1 and 21:34. He does not, however, foreground the element of location in his interpretation of the narrative. Coats, *Genesis*, 149-57.

20:1	A	Sojourn note
20:2-18	B	Interaction with Abimelech
21:1-7	C	Birth of Isaac
21:8-21	C'	Dismissal of Ishmael
21:22-33	B'	Interaction with Abimelech
21:34	A'	Sojourn note

The thematic connections between the elements of the structure above also contribute to their unity. Between the first interaction with Abimelech and the report of the birth of Isaac, where a strong dividing line is often drawn by both chapter and traditional source divisions, we may observe close parallels.[71] God brings about a miraculous transformation from barrenness to birth both when Abimelech's wife and female slaves give birth (20:17-18), and in the verses immediately following, when Sarah gives birth. In both cases God is the subject of two active verbs with the women as their objects (v. 17-18 וַיִּרְפָּא and עָצַר; v.1 פָּקַד and וַיַּעַשׂ), and in both verses Abraham performs a religious act related to the births (prayer and circumcision, respectively). Far from a digression that is "out of place in the present text,"[72] disrupting the sequence of the two passages about Abimelech,[73] Isaac's birth is connected closely to Abraham's interaction with his host during a time of sojourn. Isaac's birth is also described as occurring "at the time which God had told to Abraham" (21:2), highlighting this timing as significant, selected by divine appointment.

The narrative, then, situates the birth of Isaac within, and perhaps even at the heart of, Abraham's sojourn experience.[74] Isaac's birth is also the clear fulfillment of

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[71] Several scholars note the narrative alignment of these two elements. See Alter, *Genesis*, 96; Coats, *Genesis*, 149; Davidson, 84; Fretheim, 481; Laurence A. Turner, *Genesis*, Readings: A New Biblical Commentary (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 94.

[72] Van Seters, *Abraham*, 172.

[73] Gunkel, *Genesis*, 227 (ET, 225).

[74] The dismissal of Hagar and Ishmael belongs to this sojourn experience as well, and deserves a closer look than is possible here due to the constraints of space. At the least, it seems that the narrative positions the episode as a counterpart to the birth of Isaac, thus clarifying the fulfillment of the promise positively by designating the promised son, then negatively by distancing the son who is not of the promise. Still, while Ishmael is excluded from the elements of the promise most closely linked to ethnic identification, as he is not to be "reckoned as offspring" (21:12) and will not "inherit" (21:10), he does receive a third element of the promise, the blessing of divine accompaniment (21:20).

God's promise of progeny, highlighted by the triple emphasis of the text: "as he had said…as he had spoken…at the time of which God had spoken" (21:1-2).[75] As Janzen notes, the poetic repetition reinforces a sense of satisfactory closure to the narrative tension set in motion as early as 11:30.[76] The narrative thus locates the long-awaited fulfillment of the divine promise within the land of sojourn, and connects the birth miracle with a birth miracle performed by the same God among the host people of the area. Sojourn is set up here, then, as a context of blessing. The logic is surprising, even paradoxical. Sojourn means residence without belonging, and as such is an anti-pole to the possession of land, which represents the fulfillment of the divine promises regarding Canaan. Yet sojourn as a state of non-fulfillment is the very context in which another aspect of the promise, that of progeny, receives dramatic fulfillment.[77] Sojourn is thus portrayed in this text as containing within it the unmistakably positive element of promise fulfillment.

Why is sojourn a context for blessing and the fulfillment of the promises? The fulfillment of promise for the patriarch through a miraculous birth follows upon the reception of the same blessing by the people amongst whom he sojourns, and who receive it through his intercession.[78] The juxtaposition may suggest that an ethic

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Perhaps sojourn is a setting that plays a special role in sharpening the understanding of election for the descendants of Abraham, both those within Israel and those without.

[75] Brueggemann highlights this emphasis as an indication that the birth "comes only by the promise of God." Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis*, IBC (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), 180.

[76] Janzen, *Abraham*, 71. See also Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 86-87. R.W. Neff highlights the parallels between the promises of 17:21 and 18:10 and their fulfillment in 21:2; Alter also notes that 21:7 is a symmetrical reversal of 18:12-13, again emphasizing fulfillment. Robert Wilbur Neff, "The Birth and Election of Isaac in the Priestly Tradition," *BR* 15 (1970): 6, 10; Alter, *Genesis*, 98.

[77] It can be argued that fulfillment of the promise of land possession itself is also hinted at in this narrative, for Abimelech invites Abraham to settle in his land (20:15) and grants him rights to the well at Beer-sheba (21:25-33). Both events are ambiguous, however, both in the allowance itself from Abimelech, and in the relation of the location to the land of promise. The narrative development of these episodes is discussed more fully in Chapter Four.

[78] It is possible that this text also represent a further fulfillment, that of Abraham bringing blessing to the nations. It is difficult to make this argument, however, when Abraham is also the cause of the problem that precedes the solution; had he not lied about his wife, Abimelech's household would not have been afflicted to begin with. Fretheim and L. Turner argue that Abraham is actually bringing a curse upon the nations here, although this may also be seen as a fulfillment of the promise in 12:3 that God will curse those who are in a negative relationship to Abraham, as Coats maintains. M.E. Biddle maintains the story fulfills both positive and negative sides of the blessing promise. This study restricts the identification of promise fulfillment elements to explicit textual references, either to the prior speech of God, such as those in 21:1-2 (as above), or by mirroring of the promise language in narrative reports, such as in ch. 26 (see Chapter Three). See Fretheim, 484; Turner, 93; George W. Coats, "A Threat to the Host," in *Saga, Legend, Tale, Novella, Fable: Narrative Forms in Old Testament Literature*, ed. George W. Coats, JSOTSup 35 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1985), 80; Mark E. Biddle, "The 'Endangered Ancestress' and Blessing for the Nations," *JBL* 109, no. 4 (1990): 608.

of positive interaction with others is related somehow to sojourn, but the connection is not made clear in the text. The relationship of sojourn to ethics receives detailed attention in the final chapter of this study, in exploration of the sojourn references occurring in dialogue form. At this point, our analysis is restricted to the broad structural positioning of Isaac's birth within a sojourn setting.

Some scholars have sought a rationale for the text's logic in the historical circumstances of the exilic period. Albertz observes the connection of Isaac's birth with sojourn, and interprets it within the framework of his source-critical proposal for an exilic "Patriarchal History" source (PH) with two editions, one of which focuses on Abraham's alien status and introduces the possibility of promise fulfillment outside the land of Israel.[79] In this framework Isaac's birth is relevant to an exilic author and audience as an argument that "legitimate offspring of Abraham could be born in a foreign land," emphasizing that the second patriarch himself was "a child of the Diaspora."[80] E. T. Mullen, Jr., also accentuates the location of Isaac's birth, adding the observation that the first eleven of Jacob's sons are born in Aram/Mesopotamia, and Ephraim and Manasseh are also born outside Palestine. For Mullen, these foreign-born children receiving the land through the promise to their ancestors allows those born in exile to share in the inheritance of the land, a concern prevalent during the restoration of Jerusalem in the Persian period.[81]

Aside from questions about the source-critical proposals of these two authors, their interpretations are problematic because they isolate the theme of blessing-in-sojourn from its broader context in the Genesis story. Both analyses betray an underlying assumption that the idea of blessing outside the land poses a sharp contrast to the promise of land possession. This counter-theme, then, must originate in a different historical context than that of the dominant land theme. The concept of promise and fulfillment, with sojourn as the temporary state of non-fulfillment, is not allowed to embrace both poles of the tension portrayed above.

Smith's ethnic myth affords a framework, however, in which the paradoxical depiction of sojourn in this text is allowed to retain its complexity. The association of sojourn with promise fulfillment accords with the logic of the myth of ethnic election, Smith's term for the divine promise in Genesis which functions as the charter for

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[79] Albertz, *Exilszeit*, 193, 196-97, 204 (ET, 248, 254-55, 264).
[80] Ibid., 205 (ET, 265).
[81] Mullen, 152, 159.

Israel's ethnic identity. In Genesis, this promise involves a departure from both land and kin in order to establish an alternative identity, through the possession of a God-given land and the production of God-given offspring. The land of origin and the community of birth are both relinquished, and a new land and new family are guaranteed by divine grant. The divine promise thus both defines and provides the new grounds of being for the emerging *ethnie*. The narrative then tells the story of the sojourner who comes to belong in the land *by the action of God*, and the barren one who miraculously gives birth *by divine intervention*. While barrenness and sojourn are in one sense the counterpart to the blessing desired, they are the necessary routes to a new ethnic identity in which land and descendants are clearly granted by God, in accordance with a charter promise.[82] The promise thus admits a positive dimension to sojourn that co-exists with its primary negative valuation as a state of non-fulfillment. While sojourn is the opposite pole to the anticipated possession of the land, it is also the path that must be followed en route to this possession, and is in this way a path of blessing. The story of Isaac's birth in Gerar highlights this positive dimension of sojourn. It is only an initial suggestion, however, of a theme that is more fully developed by the range of sojourn references still to be addressed.

Sojourn in Paddan-aram (36:27; 36:7; 37:1)

Jacob's visit to Paddan-aram, like the previous sojourn stories, takes the shape of a structured circuit out from and back to the land of Canaan. His departure and return are both marked by theophanies at Bethel and at Mahanaim/Peniel (chs. 28 and 32). Conflict and resolution with Esau frame the journey (chs. 27 and 33). On his return, Jacob describes the time he spent in Paddan-aram as *sojourn* (32:5). Since

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[82] R.S. Hendel, Hauge, S. Kunin, and J.G. Williams analyze the motif of matriarchal barrenness as a vehicle for communicating the sacred origins of the progeny born thereafter. Barrenness, like sojourn, emphasizes ethnic election in two ways: the land/progeny given is accomplished by divine grant rather than natural processes, and the "delay" in the fulfillment of the gift underscores the futility of the natural process and thus the power of the divine intervention on behalf of the elect. Sojourn and barrenness thus operate by similar logic to elevate the divine element of Israel's ethnic election, emphasizing sacred origins for both the people and its territory. See Ronald S. Hendel, *The Epic of the Patriarch: The Jacob Cycle and the Narrative Traditions of Canaan and Israel*, HSM 42 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1987), 39-40; Hauge, "Struggles I," 9-10; Seth Daniel Kunin, *The Logic of Incest: A Structuralist Analysis of Hebrew Mythology*, JSOTSup 185 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 72-74, 86, 122-25; James G. Williams, "The Beautiful and the Barren: Conventions in Biblical Type-Scenes," *JSOT* 17 (1980): 116.

the reference does not occur within an itinerary notice, however, its analysis is deferred to Chapter Four. The itinerary notices concerning Jacob that do reference sojourn occur after his return from Paddan-aram, in 35:27, 36:7, and 37:1. The first and last of these three are similar. Both locate Jacob in a place where his father(s) had sojourned. Each has a different position in its narrative context, the first concluding the story of Jacob and the second launching the story of Joseph. The two references, nevertheless, share the basic function of bringing final closure to the Jacob narrative, and are therefore analyzed together here. The middle reference, 36:7, will receive attention immediately following.

A. Jacob's sojourn ends in Hebron/Canaan (35:27; 37:1)

In 35:26 Jacob "comes to" his father Isaac at Mamre, or Hebron, "where Abraham and Isaac had sojourned." In the subsequent verse Isaac dies and is buried by Esau and Jacob; the family burial site in the cave of Machpelah now holds the bodies of both Abraham and Isaac (see 49:31). The itinerary with the death notice bring closure not only to Isaac's story, but also to the story of Jacob. The long circuit of Jacob's Paddan-aram sojourn in the preceding chapters has not been brought to completion all at once. Four stages of closure can be observed:[83]

1. In chs. 32 and 33 Jacob returns to Canaan and reunites with his brother. The text here concludes several themes that were launched with his departure. Geographically, however, Jacob has not yet come full circle; he also has not yet reunited with his father, who had "sent him away" (28:5) in the opening itinerary notice of the journey to Paddan-aram.

2. In ch. 35 Jacob goes to Bethel, and at this point a second symmetry in his overarching journey is completed.[84] During his first stop at Bethel on his way out of Canaan, Jacob had made a vow, "if God will be with me and protect me on this way I am traveling" (28:20-21). On his return to Bethel, Jacob makes tribute to "the God who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me in the way I have traveled" (35:3). The event provides further closure to Jacob's extended sojourn circuit.

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[83] Scholarly proposals for structure and closure in the Jacob cycle are addressed in detail in Chapter Four.

[84] A. de Pury perceives a coherent arc of tension spanning the Jacob narrative, interpreting this second arrival as evidence for a variant source, the presence of which nevertheless does not seriously disrupt the pattern. Albert de Pury, "Le cycle de Jacob comme légende autonome des origines d'Israël," in *Congress Volume Leuven 1989*, ed. J.A. Emerton, VTSup 43 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991), 87.

3. In 35:27 Jacob comes to his father. Here the circle is fully closed. The sojourn reference in this verse echoes that of 28:3 when Isaac sent Jacob away, forming another bracketing symmetry in the narrative. The narrative focus shifts away from Jacob following this reference; ch. 36 is taken up with accounts of the descendants of Esau and the kings of Edom (with a brief notice of Esau's move away from Canaan, which will receive attention shortly), and ch. 37 repeats the sojourn notice before beginning the story of Joseph.

4. 37:1 repeats the note that Jacob is located in the land where his father had sojourned, but with a new verb, וַיֵּשֶׁב, indicating that he stayed there continuously. Thus 35:27 records Jacob's arrival in Canaan, and 37:1 describes his ongoing residence there. At the end of his wanderings, Jacob makes Canaan his permanent home. His movements turn to stasis.

The pair of itinerary notices in 35:27 and 37:1 thus work together to bring Jacob's sojourn in Paddan-aram to a comprehensive end. At this final conclusion of his sojourn, the text describes Jacob's location (Hebron in 35:27, Canaan in 37:1) as the place where Isaac and Abraham had sojourned. Two issues arise here for consideration. First, it is significant that Hebron/Canaan is described as a place of sojourn for Abraham and Isaac. Second, it is striking that it is not described as a place of sojourn for Jacob.

In the itinerary notices of sojourn occurring thus far, two locations have been situated on the text's ideological map. Egypt has been designated as a place of sojourn over and against Canaan, and Gerar has been designated as a place of sojourn, with some ambiguity as to its geographical/ideological classification (possibly with Canaan or with Egypt). Now in 35:27 and 37:1, Hebron in particular and Canaan in general are designated as places of sojourn. This is the first clear designation (in the itinerary notices) of a location unambiguously within Canaan as a place of sojourn for the patriarchs.

If Hebron/Canaan is a place of sojourn, we must ask in relation to what; that is, what is the corresponding place of belonging? It could be Haran, the land of origin, but this land has receded through the progression of the narrative into the distant past of Abraham, the only patriarch to refer to it as his land or the land of his fathers. In the Jacob cycle, Haran is referred to only as a place of sojourn. If the patriarchs now sojourn in Hebron/Canaan as well, where is it that they do belong?

Here once again, Smith's myth of ethnic election provides a helpful interpretive framework. The promise speeches that appear repeatedly throughout the narrative relate the travels of the patriarchs continually to this conceptual framework, and the reference to sojourn here does the same. At the start of Jacob's journey to Paddan-aram, Isaac relays to him the divine promise to give him possession of "the land of his sojourn" (28:4).[85] Here at the final conclusion to Jacob's journey, God reiterates the promise of land possession (several verses earlier, in 35:12). The land of Canaan is thus the land of sojourn as interpreted within the conceptual framework of the divine promise of possession. It is designated as a place of sojourn because it is given by God. The place of belonging is not the land of origin which lies in their past, but the land of possession which lies ahead in their future. The land in which they sojourn is the only land in which they can now belong, but that belonging is yet to take place. The divine promise, however, guarantees it.

The myth of election in Genesis demands a departure from a land of origin to a land guaranteed by divine grant. This new land is a land of sojourn, designated as such to signal its difference from a land to which an *ethnie* belongs by autochthonous origin. Sojourn, then, signals a land to which one belongs by divine appointment rather than native birth. It is almost a shorthand for God-promised, or God-given. The promise framework thus re-casts the negative element of alienation suggested by sojourn as a positive element signifying divine election. When the patriarchs sojourn in Canaan, they do so as a part of the process by which they are receiving a land given to them by God. This positive sojourn in the framework of the divine promise corresponds with the sojourn of Abraham and Isaac in Canaan referred to in 35:27 and 37:1.

These two itinerary notices do not, however, attribute sojourn to Jacob. The first itinerary notice is located at the end of Jacob's sojourn arc in Paddan-aram, and thus positions his arrival in Hebron as a return from sojourn, a homecoming. The second itinerary notice serves to finish the story of Jacob before launching the story of Joseph. As such, it brings his movements to rest, stating that he "settled" (וַיֵּשֶׁב) in Canaan, whereas his father sojourned there.[86] This brings us to our second question.

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[85] Full analysis of this verse follows in Chapter Three.

[86] 37:1 also closely parallels 36:8, which reports that Esau settled (וַיֵּשֶׁב) in Seir. The concluding report of Jacob's place of residence thus also presents a contrast with Esau's final dwelling place. Esau's exit from Canaan parallels those of Lot (13:11), Ishmael (21:21; 25:18), and the sons of Keturah (25:6), all of whom move out of the land of promise and out of the circle of ethnic election. Jacob's choice to dwell in the land thus relates to his inheritance the promise, and so it is fitting that

Did Jacob "belong" in Canaan, in a way that was different from his fathers? Was Canaan "home" to Jacob? To avoid making an argument from silence, we must look to other texts for support.

Only one text (28:4) refers to Canaan as a land of sojourn for Jacob, and that is the speech on the lips of Isaac mentioned above, in which sojourn is placed in the framework of the divine promise and related to the choice of a wife. A number of references, however, contain descriptions of Canaan as Jacob's home or place of belonging:

My father's house בֵּית אָבִי (28:21)

My home and my land אֶל־מְקוֹמִי וּלְאַרְצִי (30:25)

The land of your fathers and your birthplace (or kin) אֶל־אֶרֶץ אֲבוֹתֶיךָ וּלְמוֹלַדְתֶּךָ (31:3)

The land of your birth אֶרֶץ מוֹלַדְתֶּךָ (31:13)

Your land and your birthplace (or kin) לְאַרְצְךָ וּלְמוֹלַדְתֶּךָ (32:10)

While the phrases are varied, they communicate a common meaning.[87] They also duplicate the phrases used to describe Haran, Abraham's land of origin:

Your land and your birthplace and your father's house מֵאַרְצְךָ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ (12:1)

My father's house and the land of my birth מִבֵּית אָבִי וּמֵאֶרֶץ מוֹלַדְתִּי (24:7)

For Abraham, these designations apply to *Haran*, while *Canaan* is a place of sojourn. For Jacob, Paddan-aram—often referred to as *Haran* in the text[88]—is the land of sojourn, and *Canaan* is the land described with this vocabulary of home. The designations are exactly opposite. How and when did this striking reversal occur?[89]

One clue to the workings of the change may be found in the language used to describe Canaan as home: "the land of birth" and "the land of fathers." Concretely, Canaan has become the place where family births have occurred and the burial of

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the report of his dwelling in Canaan references his fathers before him, and mentions sojourn in allusion to the land promise. For discussions of the significance of Esau's departure from Canaan in relation to the land promise, see Hauge, "Struggles I," 14-21; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 341-42.

[87] J.P. Fokkelman attempts to read significance into the change between "this land" and "my father's house" in 28: 15, 21. Van Seters, however, marshals several of the references above in order to counter that little weight can be placed on these variations in terminology. J.P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in Genesis: Specimens of Stylistic and Structural Analysis*, Studia Semitica Neerlandica (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1975), 77; Van Seters, *Prologue*, 293-94.

[88] 27:43; 28:10; 29:4.

[89] The change is sustained in the following generation; 48:21 and 50:24 define Canaan as the land of the fathers in regard to the sons of Jacob.

ancestors has taken place—both meticulously recorded as significant events throughout the Genesis narrative. Smith writes,

> The term 'ancestral land' immediately suggests a place of origin. But that is misleading. A land may become an ancestral homeland after some generations, even though it was originally occupied through migration and/or conquest. Over the generations, it has become a homeland, 'our place', and the resting places of our immediate progenitors, if not our (usually mythical) distant ancestors. …after a few generations, the acquired homeland became 'ancestral', the place of home and work, family and burial, for the community and its members.[90]

As noted in Chapter One, Smith draws special attention to the burial sites of ancestors, as they make the land a witness to the survival of the community.[91] Through the final resting-places of communal forebears "the land becomes 'our' territory and the 'eternal home' of our ancestors, an *ancestral homeland*..."[92] For Jacob, his family's history is now located in and upon the soil of Canaan, if only for "a few generations." The burial of his father reported in close conjunction with the note about sojourn (35:29) vividly depicts the almost-physical inscription of memory in the soil of the land. This ancestral history makes Canaan for Jacob the land of birth and of the fathers, a land not of sojourn but belonging. The process by which this has occurred accords with Smith's territorialization of memory, in which the recording of ethnic memory in the land transforms territory into an ethnoscape. Like Abraham in chs. 12-13, Jacob claimed Canaan as his home, not by legal possession, but through the claim of memory. For both Abraham then and Jacob now, sojourn abroad—in Egypt (12:10) and in Paddan-aram (32:5)—was the counterpart to belonging in Canaan.

The itineraries describe Hebron/Canaan as the place where Abraham and/or Isaac had sojourned. This note underscores Jacob's status in the land as different from the sojourn experience of Abraham and Isaac. It also points to a particular way of seeing the land. It is home, but it is at the same time the place that was not home one or two generations before. It is at once home and not-home, the land that is now a dwelling place and the land in which the fathers sojourned. The calling up of the memory of sojourn is a recollection of the specific process Abraham and Isaac

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[90] Smith, *Chosen*, 147-48.
[91] Smith, *Myths*, 151.
[92] Ibid., 269. Emphasis original.

experienced. The patriarchs lived in the land of Canaan as sojourners, not possessing the land but being present there in response to the divine command to do so, in expectation of divinely-guaranteed future possession. These actions of the patriarchs claimed the ground for their offspring not as legal right, but as the place of memory. Thus the recollection of their travels through the land, the memory of their sojourn, is ironically the statement not of impermanence but of a kind of possession, an establishment of the claim of history. Here sojourn, although it indicates non-belonging, is itself a part of the territorialization of memory, which brings about belonging. In this sense, then, sojourn as a way of life is once again a positive element in the ethnic myth.

B. Jacob and Esau's land of sojourn (36:7)

One final reference remains, 36:7, in which Esau moves away from Jacob to settle in Seir.[93] The text states that the land could not support them because of their livestock, describing their location as "the land of their sojourn," אֶרֶץ מְגוּרֵיהֶם. Although the phrase is the same as that used in 17:8, 28:4, 37:1, and 47:9, it is sometimes translated here as "the land where they were staying/dwelling."[94] It is tempting to translate the phrase as "land of their sojourn" and bring the reference into the discussion of sojourn itinerary notices. Close parallels between this verse and 13:6, however, sound a note of caution. Other than reverse ordering and a slight change of phrasing in the main verb (resulting in the shade of difference in meaning between "did not" and "could not"),[95] the verses are exact parallels:

13:6a	36:7a
The separation of Abraham & Lot	*The separation of Jacob & Esau*
And the land did not support them	For their possessions were (too) great
וְלֹא־נָשָׂא אֹתָם הָאָרֶץ	כִּי־הָיָה רְכוּשָׁם רָב
to stay together	to stay together
לָשֶׁבֶת יַחְדָּו	מִשֶּׁבֶת יַחְדָּו
for their possessions were great	and the land of their sojourn could not support them

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[93] Ch. 36 as a whole presents a number of interpretive challenges as its account of Jacob and Esau's separation is at odds with the preceding narrative, as are the names of Esau's wives. For a source-critical discussion of this chapter, see R. Christopher Heard, *Dynamics of Diselection: Ambiguity in Genesis 12-36 and Ethnic Boundaries in Post-Exilic Judah*, SemeiaSt 39 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001), 134-36.

[94] See for example translations in the *New Revised Standard Version* (1989) and the *New International Version* (1984), also Davidson, 206; Fretheim, 587; Vawter, 367.

[95] R.C. Heard makes much of this difference in his interpretation, extrapolating differing motivations behind the drawing of ethnic boundary lines in these verses. Heard, 30.

וְלֹא יָכְלָה אֶרֶץ מְגוּרֵיהֶם לָשֵׂאת אֹתָם   כִּי־הָיָה רְכוּשָׁם רָב

The second verse differs only in adding the designation of sojourn to "the land." Since the word מָגוֹר allows for the second meaning "dwelling-place,"[96] and the verses are so similar, also lying within pericopes that have similar thrusts, it seems that the neutral translation "dwelling place" is more appropriate than the symbolically loaded translation "sojourning" or "residing as aliens."[97] Adopting this translation means that 36:7 is effectively disqualified from the circle of texts referencing sojourn, and is not allowed a contribution to this study. An argument could be made, however, that this text is integrally related to themes that have been prominent in our discussion of sojourn. It is true that this itinerary notice is significant within the structure of the narrative, and as such deserves exegetical attention for its role in developing key themes in the narrative relating to territory, election, and the promises. These themes are certainly central to this study. Since the word מָגוֹר in this text does not necessarily communicate a sense of alienation, however, it should not play a role in the analysis of *sojourn* in relation to these themes.[98]

Excluding this reference from the study of sojourn in Genesis, however, raises another question: why not translate all the references to sojourn in the itinerary notices with the more neutral terms "staying" or "dwelling"? Here the sojourn references classified under the other categories (promise speeches and dialogue) play a part. In most of these references the neutral designation "dwelling" would render the verse nonsensical. These other references thus establish a signification which then interacts with the possible significations of the word in the itinerary notices. The use of sojourn to express an element of alienation is already important in Genesis outside of the itinerary notices. The continued use of the word with the same meaning in the itinerary notices accords well with the development of its meaning in

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[96] Brown, Driver, and Briggs, 158. See also Ps. 55:16 and Job 18:19. Ramírez Kidd analyzes a list of texts where sojourn (√גור) is synonymous with dwelling (√ישב; √שכן). Ramírez Kidd, 26-27.

[97] Rashi, by contrast, cites a Midrash which connects sojourn here with its place in the promise speeches, thus giving it weighty symbolic significance. The interpretation suggests that Esau moved away because he could not bear to pay the debt of sojourn, required in 15:7 from the descendants of Abraham who would eventually inherit the land. In the text, however, it is the land that cannot bear a burden, not Esau. Rashi, *Pentateuch with Rashi's Commentary: Genesis*, trans. M. Rosenbaum and A.M. Silbermann (London: Shapiro, Valentine & Co., 1929), 174.

[98] The phrase "land of sojourn," אֶרֶץ מָגוֹר, occurs elsewhere in Genesis (specifically in P) carrying a sense of alienation. This is perhaps the strongest argument for the translation "sojourn" in the reference here. If the phrase were to be interpreted with a sense of alienation, the phrase would then bear a meaning similar to its signification in 17:8, and its analysis would run along similar lines.

other texts, and there is therefore no need to consider a secondary meaning except in cases of clear textual warrant, such as the one above.

Conclusion

Sojourn in the itinerary notices of Genesis serves an important function in the construction of an ethnoscape, helping to clarify the ideological map of the text by coloring certain locations with shades of alienation and others with shades of belonging. As the patriarchs move through the land of Canaan and its surrounding regions, the narrative uses the theme of sojourn to describe their relationship with the land. In the end, Genesis portrays Egypt, Gerar, Paddan-aram, and Canaan all as places of sojourn for the patriarchs. Within this general statement, however, there are many qualifications of meaning.

Sojourn in Canaan is the most complex and nuanced. When the focus is on the territorialization of memory, Canaan is positioned as the homeland, the location of belonging and destiny. This is clear in the stories of both Abraham and Jacob. In contrast to this position stand Egypt and Paddan-aram, where the patriarchs sojourn temporarily, with clear structural emphasis on their eventual return. When the emphasis is on ethnic election, however, Canaan can be a site of sojourn for the patriarchs. Here sojourn works paradoxically to bind Israel to its land, strengthening the position of Canaan as an ethnoscape even as it describes patriarchal estrangement within it. Present estrangement points toward future belonging, paralleled during Abraham's stay in Gerar by barrenness resolving into birth. Both negative states, sojourn and barrenness, signal the divine charter that brought the *ethnie* into being, for both the possession of the land and the production of offspring are to be effected by divine intervention alone. Thus Israel's tie to Canaan is not merely natural, but sacred, and the ethnoscape is powerfully bound to the destiny of the *ethnie* by divine appointment.

Describing Canaan as the land where the fathers sojourned encapsulates in one succinct phrase both the election myth, which ties Israel to its land by divine grant rather than autochthonous origin, and the territorialization of memory, by which the ancestral lives spent in sojourn in Canaan inscribed memory in the land and transformed it into a home. Sojourn plays an important role in constructing an

ethnoscape for Israel, and Smith's understanding of ethnic myth effectively illuminates the varied nuances of this complex and significant theme.

CHAPTER THREE
Bolstering Ethnic Election: Sojourn in the Promise Speeches

Sojourn appears four times in the context of speeches that promise the hearer a divine gift of land (15:13; 17:8; 26:3; and 28:4). God is the speaker in all the above references except Gen. 28:4, where Isaac is the speaker. In this speech, however, Isaac invokes divine blessing upon Jacob, wishing (or predicting) that God will give to him the "blessing of Abraham," which consists of the land promise as given in the other speeches. The thematic and linguistic similarity between the blessing speech of Isaac and the promise speeches of God allows for the grouping of these texts together in this section, which addresses sojourn in the context of divine promise. I will examine each of the promise speeches in order of their appearance in the narrative.

In this section I draw upon Anthony D. Smith's understanding of the myth of ethnic election to interpret the promise speeches. As discussed in Chapter One, myths of ethnic election are "tales about being chosen by God at a particular moment and place, which may be subsequently repeated and confirmed, thereby inspiring successive generations."[1] Myths of election distinguish the *ethnie* by a special relationship to the deity: "To be chosen in this sense is to be singled out for special purposes by, and hence to stand in a unique relation to, the divine. Persons or groups who are chosen are marked off from the multitude, often at first by a divine promise…"[2] Smith observes that myths of election typically include the divine grant of a territory particular to the *ethnie*. The inclusion of territory in the myth of election strengthens ethnic identity by linking the elected *ethnie* to a particular terrain, and by providing a mythic rationale for the connection.[3] The land is "conferred by the deity on a sanctified people as a reward for correct belief and conduct in the execution of their shared mission."[4] In this way the land is inextricably bound up with ethnic identity, and becomes the sole arena for the realization of a collective destiny.

The promise speeches in Genesis and Exodus correspond to Smith's category of ethnic election myth, and the land grant in these speeches fit his understanding of the sacralization of territory. Sojourn references appearing in the promise speeches

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[1] Smith, "Election," 335.
[2] Smith, *Chosen*, 48.
[3] Smith, *Myths*, 135, 208.
[4] Ibid., 270.

are a significant element of this territorial aspect, providing an interesting interplay with the logic of the election myth. In this chapter I explore the role of sojourn as an element in the framework of Israel's election myth, and thus as a significant contributor to ethnic identity. We turn first to the analysis of Gen. 15:13.

Genesis 15:13

The first mention of sojourn in a promise speech follows after three promise speeches which do not mention sojourn, 12:1-3; 12:7; and 13:14-17. These initial promises establish Abraham as the ancestor of a nation (12:2) and designate the land of Canaan as the territory given by God to the people who will descend from Abraham (12:7; 13:15). The text of ch.15 presents an extended dialogue between God and Abraham about the *way* in which the promised possession of the land will take place. Here Abraham responds to a divine promise with dialogue for the first time in the narrative, asking questions regarding the actualization of the promise. The preceding promises in the narrative have used the verb "to give," √נתן (12:7; 13:15, 17), focusing on the bequest of the land from God to Abraham,[5] but this narrative introduces for the first time the verb "to inherit/take possession of," √ירש (15:3, 4, 7, 8), concentrating on the more practical question of the actual tenure of the land.[6]

The narrative is structured in two parallel panels (vv. 1-6; 7-21), each with a question asked by Abraham.[7] The first question is "What are you giving me?" (v. 2),

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[5] Smith shows that an ideology of divine grant creates a strong conceptual bond between the ethnie and its land. Biblical scholars have probed the formal background of the grant language employed by the promise speeches in the patriarchal narratives; for example, E. Lipiński argues that the promise narratives employ a specialized use of the verb √נתן in a formula denoting the granting of a gift with legal status, and M. Weinfeld also proposes that the land gift in ch. 15 is styled according to the pattern of a royal grant. A juridical background to the concept of the divine gift can harmonize with Smith's understanding. It provides a possible refinement to the ideology of grant, but is not strictly necessary for a strong literary presentation of the idea. Lipiński and Fabry, "נָתַן," 704 (ET, 100); Moshe Weinfeld, "The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East," *JAOS* 90, no. 2 (1970): 199.

[6] The verb √ירש is common in Deuteronomy, where it refers to Israel's taking possession of the land. L.A. Snijders suggests the translation "to occupy (someone's place)." See discussions in L.A. Snijders, "Gen XV: The Covenant with Abram," in *Studies on the Book of Genesis*, OtSt 12 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1958), 268-69; Edward Noort, "'Land' in the Deuteronomistic Tradition—Genesis 15: The Historical and Theological Necessity of a Diachronic Approach," in *Synchronic or Diachronic? A Debate on Method in Old Testament Exegesis*, ed. Johannes C. de Moor, OtSt (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), 144; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 329.

[7] This two-part structure was initially discerned by N. Lohfink and further elaborated by others. See Norbert Lohfink, *Die Landverheißung als Eid*, SBS 28 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1967), 45; Coats, *Genesis*, 123; Van Seters, *Abraham*, 260-61; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 325-26; Paul R.

the second "By what do I know that I will possess it?" (v. 8). In the first question Abraham is not actually asking what God will give him, but rather posing a negative rhetorical question, as he continues on to state that he has no son. In other words, he is saying that God is effectively giving him nothing ("What are you giving me?!") since he has no son to maintain the gift of land as a family possession through inheritance.[8] Land and family go together, one ensuring the continuity of the other, so that the fulfillment of one part of the promise (land gift) means nothing without the other (offspring).[9] The rest of this first section revolves around the reiteration of God's promise of offspring to Abraham. The promise responds to Abraham's implied question about how he will actually retain the gift God gives him.

The conversation about the possession of the land is not over, however. In the second portion of the narrative God states that he brought Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give him "this land" to possess (v. 7). Abraham then asks God how he can know that he will possess it (v. 8). God answers the question after he commands him to bring animals which Abraham then sacrifices,[10] and after the narrative further sets the scene with a few ominous touches presaging negative content (carrion birds, sunset, and a terrifying darkness, vv. 11-12). Then God's response begins with the statement, "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and will be slaves there, and will be oppressed for four hundred years" (v. 13). Thus Abraham asks how he will know (√ידע), v. 8, and God answers that he will certainly know (√ידע as verb and infinite absolute), v. 13. As an answer to

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Williamson, *Abraham, Israel and the Nations: The Patriarchal Promise and its Covenantal Development in Genesis*, JSOTSup 315 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 114, 122-24.

[8] P.R. Davies, D. Sutherland, and Hamilton emphasize the confrontational tone of this question. Van Seters and Westermann classify vs. 2-3 as a lament, another way of accenting an element of reproach. Philip R. Davies, *Whose Bible is it Anyway?*, JSOTSup, vol. 204 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 104-06; Dixon Sutherland, "The Organization of the Abraham Promise Narratives," *ZAW* 95, no. 3 (1983): 342; Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 417; Van Seters, *Abraham*, 255; Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 259-61 (ET, 219-20).

[9] Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 142; Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 261 (ET, 220-21); Williamson, 123.

[10] Much attention has been given to the search for historical parallels to this ritual, especially in the realm of covenant ceremonies. A variety of interpretations results regarding the significance of the action. For a varied sampling, see Ronald E. Clements, *Abraham and David: Genesis XV and its Meaning for Israelite Tradition*, SBT 2nd ser. 5 (London: SCM, 1967), 34 n. 45; Gerhard F. Hasel, "The Meaning of the Animal Rite in Genesis 15," *JSOT* 19 (1981): 61-70; Diana Lipton, *Revisions of the Night: Politics and Promises in the Patriarchal Dreams of Genesis*, JSOTSup 288 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 202-03; Ernest W. Nicholson, *God and His People: Covenant and Theology in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986), 90; Pagolu, 64-65; Snijders, 272-74; Van Seters, *Abraham*, 100-03, 258; Weinfeld: 196-98; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 332-33; Gordon J. Wenham, "The Symbolism of the Animal Rite in Gen 15: A Response to G.F. Hasel, *JSOT* 19 (1981) 61-78," *JSOT* 22 (1982): 134-36; Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 268-73 (ET, 225-29).

Abraham's question, however, what God says is hardly reassuring. God informs Abraham that the possession of the land which he asks about is going to be delayed, and he himself will die before his offspring will return "in the fourth generation" (v. 16). Until then, they will be sojourners. The bald fact of it is that Abraham himself— as well as several generations of his descendants—will not possess the land at all.

The passage provides detail for the predicted time of sojourn. First, Abraham's offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, גֵר בְּאֶרֶץ לֹא לָהֶם (v. 13). Throughout Genesis the promise speeches pair the word "land" (אֶרֶץ) with the preposition "to/for" (לְ) and a prepositional object that is the patriarchs and/or their offspring, communicating the belonging of the land to them.[11] Here, however, the particle of negation "לֹא" thrusts itself between "land" and "theirs" to counter the sense of belonging created by the preposition "לְ". The phrase functions to define sojourn (here, being a "גֵר"): it is presence in a land one does *not* possess. Strikingly, it is a state that is precisely the opposite of what God has until now been promising Abraham.

The prediction of sojourn comes at the start of a series describing the future of Abraham's descendants in Egypt: "your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and will be slaves to them, and they will oppress them for four hundred years" (v. 13). With each element the picture grows more negative: sojourn in a land not possessed, enslavement, then oppression (stretched out over a duration of four centuries).[12] The elements in the series depict the inversion of possession, not only in the absence of possession which is sojourn, but in the total reversal of possession into slavery, which is *being* possessed.

The duration of the sojourn, four hundred years, is stated last, and represents the low point of the journey. Then in v. 14 the three-step movement to the farthest point away from possession is turned around with a reverse sequence: "I will bring judgment on the nation they serve, and after that they will come out with great possessions, …and they will come back here" (vv. 14, 16). Geographically the sojourn will be reversed as Abraham's descendants come out of Egypt, and symbolically their sojourn will be ameliorated with the accumulation of possessions.

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[11] See 12:7; 13:15; 13:17; 15:7; 15:18; 17:8; 24:7; 26:3, 4; 28:4; 28:13; 35:12; and 48:4.

[12] The confusion over "four centuries" and the "fourth generation" of v. 16 has occasioned much commentary. For a review of the salient positions and an argument for a typological rather than a historical reading, see Lipton, 210-11.

Owning these רְכוּשׁ, or "movable possessions,"[13] is clearly not the same as the possession of the land granted by promise. It is offered here, however, as providing some comfort, some counter to the negative trajectory of sojourn.[14] Ultimately the true termination of sojourn is foretold in the finale of the pericope, when God affirms, "To your offspring I will give this land" (v.18), once again using the granting verb √נתן. Here also for the first time, the land is acknowledged in a promise speech to belong at present to other peoples, vv. 19-21.

The promise speech here adds significant elaboration to the content of the prior promise speeches. All the speeches thus far, including this one, can be seen to function within Smith's conceptual framework as a territorial title-deed providing the *ethnie* descending from Abraham with a convincing claim to the land.[15] The ethnic election myth expressed in these promises places the association between the people and the land within a legitimizing framework which strengthens ethnic identity.[16] Here in ch. 15, however, there is a new element, the introduction of a period of sojourn which postpones ethnic realization in the homeland.

The prediction of Israel's sojourn in ch. 15 serves as a structural link between the Abrahamic and the Mosaic narratives, two traditions which biblical scholarship has proposed were originally independent.[17] This study will not address the historical development of these traditions. What is under examination here, rather, is the role that the sojourn prediction plays in the ethnic myth as an element within a now-integrated whole. Literarily, the sojourn prediction acts here as a hyphen linking the two periods.[18] A time of sojourn, stretching from Abraham's time to the time of the

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[13] Brown, Driver, and Briggs, 940.

[14] The narrative associates the accumulation of portable wealth with patriarchal sojourn experiences throughout the book of Genesis. What these sojourn gains reflect on the understanding of sojourn will be explored in Chapter Four.

[15] Mullen emphasizes the importance of the terminology in this promise as an indication of its function as ethnic myth. "An essential point about this covenantal promise that is commonly overlooked is that though the promise is made to Abraham, the gift is directed to his offspring. That is, the recipients of the promise are those of the *present* generation who can trace their lineage to this figure to whom was given this solemn promise by "Israel's" god." Mullen, 137.

[16] Smith, *Myths*, 69, 219.

[17] For an overviews of scholarship examining the historical relationship between the exodus and fathers traditions, see Van Seters, *Prologue*, 215-26.

[18] Moshe Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land: The Inheritance of the Land of Canaan by the Israelites*, Taubman Lectures in Jewish Studies (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 6-10; Moshe Weinfeld, "The Promise to the Patriarchs and its Realization: An Analysis of Foundation Stories," in *Society and Economy in the Eastern Mediterranian (c. 1500-1000 B.C.): Proceedings of the International Symposium Held at the University of Haifa from the 28th of April to the 2nd of May 1985*, ed. M. Heltzer and E. Lipiński, Orientalia Lovanensia Analecta (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 1988), 356.

return to Canaan, fills the chronological gap. Sojourn is more than a simple seam, however.[19] The narrative of ch. 15 sketches an overall scheme of history in which Abraham's migration from Ur and his descendants' exodus from Egypt are placed in parallel. The juxtaposition occurs on several levels, each of which highlights a particular aspect of significance for the sojourn prediction.

1) Linguistically, the verb "come" (√יצא) plays a part in knitting together the narrative. God makes Abraham come out of his tent (v. 5), reminds Abraham that he made him come out of Ur (v. 7), and predicts that his offspring will come out of the land where they will be slaves (v. 14). As Amos points out, "The 'bringings out' from the past, present and future belong together".[20] The phrasing of v. 7 parallels the formula used elsewhere in the Pentateuch for the exodus (Ex. 20:2; Dt. 5:6),[21] suggesting that Abraham's journey from Ur prefigures the departure of Israel from Egypt. The text thus sets up parallels which invite comparison, and the interpretation of the two "traditions" within one framework of signification. Van Seters suggests that the significance of the exodus formula is its declaration of Israel's election as a people, and of its right to the land of Canaan.[22] Placing the migration of Abraham in parallel with this confession of identity casts the call of Abraham in a similarly central role,[23] defining Israel's ethnic identity by the twin elements of election and territory. The placement of sojourn as the connection between these two defining

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[19] Weinfeld analyzes the patriarchal stories in parallel with other ancient legends and posits a genre of "foundation stories" that consists of two stages, the first describing the migration of the ancestor to a new land, the second describing the settlement and establishment of a policy of law and civil order. He correlates the first stage with the Abrahamic stories and the second with the stories of Moses and Joshua. His argument shows the Egyptian sojourn to create a formal unity between the Abrahamic and Mosaic traditions, but does not examine further ideological implications beyond its function as a connector. Weinfeld, *Promise of the Land*, 1-51; Weinfeld, "Promise to the Patriarchs," 367-68.

[20] Amos, 88.

[21] J. Weingreen shows that the phrase is used in credo-like statements appropriate for public recitations of God's interventions in Israel's history. Noth argues for the centraliy of this formula in Israel's understanding of its election. J. Weingreen, "הוצאתיך in Genesis 15:7," in *Words and Meanings: Essays Presented to David Winton Thomas*, ed. Peter R. Ackroyd and Barnabas Lindars (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 212; Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichte*, 50-52 (ET, 47-49).

[22] Van Seters, *Abraham*, 264.

[23] M. Fishbane states that the linguistic parallel establishes a "typological nexus" between the two events, thus allowing Abraham to serve as a prototype for later Israel. Van Seters argues that applying this confessional statement to Ur instead of Egypt represents a fundamental shift in Israel's tradition of election. Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 376; John Van Seters, "Confessional Reformulation in the Exilic Period," *VT* 22 (1972): 455; Van Seters, *Abraham*, 264.

events suggests that its significance, also, will unfold within the fundamental identity categories of election and territory.

2) Both geographical movements, the coming from Ur and the coming out of Egypt, share their destination, the land of Canaan. This land is set up in the promise speeches as the territory divinely appointed and bequeathed to Israel, and as such is the ethnoscape in which Israel realizes its ethnic identity. Ur and Egypt, in contrast, are the lands that were or will be left behind, for they are locations which are not Israel's divinely chosen homeland. They differ in that Ur is a land of origin, while Egypt is a land of temporary sojourn. Both, however, serve as foils for Canaan. The double contrast of the land of promise with Ur and with Egypt intensifies the significance of Canaan in the election myth as the ethnic homeland chosen by God for the people of Israel. Here sojourn in Egypt plays the role of negative foil to the positive state of land possession in Canaan.

3) Both the departure from Ur and the departure from Egypt are set in the framework of the speech of God. As such they are presented as divine appointments, and elements of divine design for the *ethnie* that is Israel. While sojourn is clearly a negative state as presented in the text, it is also framed by the foreknowledge of the deity and transformed, at its end point, by divine intervention. In this way sojourn, although negative, can play a strengthening role in the ethnic myth. It does so by affirming that the ethnic crisis of enslavement was divinely appointed for Israel, thus heightening Israel's sense of election as an *ethnie* chosen by a deity who knows its fate, predicts its future to its ancestors, rescues it from crisis, and ensures its return to its homeland.[24]

The divine prediction here introduces, for the first time in the narrative, the idea that the possession of Canaan (promised in 12:7 and 13:15, 17) will not occur in an immediate timeframe. The first section of the text has dealt with Abraham's continued childlessness, and the second section now announces a hiatus before the promised possession of Canaan. Both barrenness and sojourn dramatize the delayed fulfillment of the promises. The delay in fulfillment of the promise is an important theme helping to structure the rest of the Genesis narrative, as well as the

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[24] The assertion that God had ordained Israel's negative experience in Egypt, and would reverse it, has been interpreted as a reflection on the parallel experience of Israel's exile in Babylon. This view would accord with the literary re-interpretation of an ethnic crisis within the framework of an ethnic myth that gives it positive significance. The conceptual parallels between sojourn and exile are certainly striking. See Amos, 86-88; Fretheim, 444-47; Lipton, 205-11, 217; Van Seters, *Abraham*, 264-69.

overarching trajectory of the Pentateuch.[25] In predicting a coming sojourn *in Egypt* before the possession of Canaan, the text here also sets up an interpretive framework for patriarchal existence *in Canaan*, in the period before the sojourn in Egypt. This period will not be characterized by possession, for the possession is yet to come, located in the future that follows after the Egyptian sojourn. Both sojourn in Canaan and sojourn in Egypt, however, will look ahead to a divinely appointed possession. The presence of the patriarchs in Canaan is thus situated in a trajectory that moves toward fulfillment, but fulfillment that is delayed. More reflection on sojourn in the land of Canaan will follow, but the text here provides another hint that patriarchal sojourn in Canaan—like Israel's sojourn in Egypt—is not to be interpreted as accidental or unfortunate. Sojourn, rather, is here pictured as a part of the divine plan, and thus a significant plank in the structure of Israel's election.

4) The text pictures both the coming from Ur and the coming from Egypt as ultimately resolving in possession. God tells Abraham he has brought him out of Ur "in order to give you this land to possess it" (v, 7), so the possession of Canaan is the end goal of the removal from Ur. Likewise Abraham's offspring "will return here" (v. 16) from the land of their sojourn, and God "will give [them] this land" (v. 18). In both events a status reversal occurs, although in the return from Egypt the transformation is more dramatic, as charted in the three-part inverted sequence above. Smith finds this type of reversal typical:

> …myths of ethnic election offer the members of a community a chronological scheme of *status reversal*. The elect may be persecuted now and subjects today; but in time their sufferings will be recognized and their virtue rewarded. They will, in the end, triumph over their enemies and attain the goal of their journey in history.[26]

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[25] Clines proposes the centrality of this theme for the Pentateuch as a whole, and Coats investigates its structural implications. Wenham provides exegetical reflection on Genesis texts in light of this theme throughout his two-volume commentary. B.S. Childs, von Rad, and W. Zimmerli approach the theme from a theological angle. Noth and Westermann probe the historical development of the idea of deferred fulfillment. See Clines, 29; Coats, *Canaan*, 2; Coats, *Genesis*, 17-18, 22-24; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 262; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 169; Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 150-52; von Rad, *Theologie*, 171-77 (ET, 167-75); Walther Zimmerli, "Promise and Fulfillment," in *Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics*, ed. Claus Westermann and James Luther Mays (Richmond: John Knox, 1963), 97-98; Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichte*, 58-60 (ET, 55-56); Claus Westermann, *Die Verheißungen an die Väter: Studien zur Vätergeschichte*, FRLANT 116 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976), 27-32, 62, 102, 118-19 (ET Claus Westermann, *The Promises to the Fathers: Studies on the Patriarchal Narratives*, trans. David E. Green [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980], 21-27, 61, 107, 126-27).

[26] Smith, *Myths*, 268. Emphasis original.

Smith notes that election myths intensify ethnic belonging by affirming "the idea that the community's special destiny will see a radical reversal of its hitherto lowly or marginal status in the world. This is a doctrine of spiritual liberation, which asserts that virtue will be rewarded in the latter days, when the last shall be first…"[27] Abraham in his journey from Ur and his offspring in their journey from Egypt both have before them the hope of future possession in Canaan. Sojourn, while "lowly or marginal," is set up in the ethnic myth as a status that will be reversed. The *ethnie* is destined for an elevated future, which is highlighted by the negative sojourn preceding it. Sojourn thus fuels a sense of election by playing the role of a negative counterpart to the positive status that is to come.

5) Both movements involve a contrastive framework with another *ethnie*. The text sets up this framework several times. Ur belonged to the Chaldeans (v. 7); the sojourn of Abraham's offspring will involve enslavement to another "nation," גּוֹי (v. 14); the Amorites are characterized by iniquity which, when complete, will pave the way for Israel's return to Canaan (v. 16);[28] and Canaan itself now belongs to a list of ten different peoples (vv. 20-21), not just the former two (13:7).[29] P.R. Davies wryly comments that God is "adding to the promise a lot of small print," and correctly notes, "The deal with Abraham is part of a larger strategy involving other nations".[30] Israel's election myth is set on a broader stage here, involving and interacting with the destinies of other *ethnies*. On the one hand, the broader scope of the strategy reflects well on Israel's deity, who is here portrayed as able to bring judgment on Egypt and the Amorites and to dispossess ten peoples in Canaan, and thus has power over more than just Israel. On the other hand, the *ethnie* itself gains a strengthened

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[27] Smith, "Election," 336.

[28] Van Seters clarifies that the term "Amorites" is used here rhetorically and ideologically, rather than as a concrete historical referent, and thus is an archetypal signifier of the non-Israelite inhabitants of Canaan. Many scholars note the resemblance of this statement about the iniquity of the Amorites with Deuteronomic or conquest portrayals of the Canaanites; see for example Thompson and Cohn. John Van Seters, "The Terms 'Amorite' and 'Hittite'," *VT* 22 (1972): 74; Thompson, *Origin*, 88; Cohn, 76-77.

[29] The list of nations figures prominently in discussions about the dating of this text (see, for example, R.E. Clements, Van Seters, and Weinfeld). T. Ishida's in-depth analysis suggests that the number ten and the roughly geographical order of the nations listed lays emphasis on a sense of completeness; a similar interpretation is given by F. Delitzsch. See Clements, 21; Van Seters, *Prologue*, 265; Weinfeld, "Covenant," 200 n. 161; Tomoo Ishida, "The Structure and Historical Implications of the Lists of Pre-Israelite Nations," *Bib* 60 (1979): 484-85; Franz Delitzsch, *Neuer Commentar über die Genesis* (Leipzig: Dörffling and Franke, 1887), 279 (ET Franz Delitzsch, *A New Commentary on Genesis*, trans. Sophia Taylor, Clark's Foreign Theological Library, n.s., 37, vol. 2 [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1889], 12).

[30] Davies, *Whose*, 106.

sense of election by the comparison with other peoples. The ten peoples now residing in Canaan, although they may now possess it, are destined for dispossession.[31] Egypt, though it may enslave and afflict the *ethnie*, will face judgment. The Chaldeans, no real threat, simply recede into the insignificance of a past outside the circle of divine promise.

These relationships of superiority to other *ethnies* (even if an actual victory is far in the imagined future) are part and parcel of myths of election. Smith observes that myths of election

> …help to draw and reinforce a strict boundary against outsiders who are not part of the ethno-religious community and who therefore have no part in the sacred mission and its duties. Election myths…have hardened the boundaries between the ethno-religious community and its neighbours (or conquerors). Myths of this kind help to segregate the chosen community from a profane and alien world….[32]

The drawing of ethnic boundaries by the myth of election interrelates specifically, according to Smith, with the concept of an ethnic homeland. The myth of election links the virtue of the *ethnie* to their possession of the land. This logic requires denouncing the wickedness of the original inhabitants of the land, as happens in this text with the Amorites, while "the sacred land awaits its 'chosen people.'"[33] The sins of the original inhabitants are part of a sense of destiny for the entering people, reinforcing their chosenness and justifying their election.

Thus Israel's election myth defines the *ethnie* over and against other peoples. Here again, sojourn serves as a contrastive foil that highlights the election of Israel. While Israel may be dominated by another *ethnie* in its sojourn experience, this enslavement will be judged by the deity and abolished. The *ethnie* will ultimately "come out" from this enslavement to actualize its identity in its own homeland. In sojourn Israel is placed in a relationship of inferiority to another *ethnie* which the deity then judges and reverses,[34] thus reinforcing the proper status of freedom and

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[31] Amos and Habel maintain that the list of nations here, in contrast with those in the Deuteronomic and conquest traditions, does not imply their dispossession. They cite the wider context of Abraham's amicable interaction with the Canaanites in Genesis as supporting evidence. As noted above, however, this passage references the iniquity of the Amorites (also listed among the ten nations) as justification for Israel's presence in the land. An antagonistic relationship to Egypt also dominates the text. Coexistence with others in the land does not appear to be the implied ideal here. Amos, 89; Habel, 125.

[32] Smith, "Election," 336.

[33] Smith, *Chosen*, 144-45.

[34] D. Daube notes that the verb "judge" (דין) used in 15:14 usually signifies the execution of justice for an individual or nation in a subordinate status. David Daube, *The Exodus Pattern in the Bible*, All Souls Studies 2 (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), 35.

possession that is appropriate to Israel's election. Israel's sense of election is thus intensified by the element of sojourn.

We may draw the general conclusion from ch. 15 that sojourn here plays a role of negative contrast within Israel's myth of ethnic election. Sojourn is existence outside the ethnic homeland. It is a temporary period of inferior status that resolves into its opposite, possession of the homeland and a status of superiority to the land's original inhabitants. Sojourn thus buttresses ethnic identity by highlighting, through contrast, the element of election in Israel's ethnic myth. In ch. 17, as we shall see, the role of sojourn is somewhat differently nuanced.

Genesis 17:8

The text of ch. 17 reports several consecutive speeches of God. The first three speeches are: a preamble (vv. 1-2),[35] a speech promising progeny (vv. 4-6), and a speech promising a relationship to God and the gift of land (vv. 7-8). The narrative then goes on to address matters of Abraham's responsibility and response, and further refinements of the progeny promise.

The chapter as a whole introduces several new elements to the promise sequence, of which the most relevant for this analysis are the elements in the second speech that frame the sojourn reference in v. 8. The phrase "to be your God," לִהְיוֹת לְךָ לֵאלֹהִים appears for the first time here and is cited twice (vv. 7, 8), emphasizing a unique relationship between God and the descendants of Abraham. While the element of permanence has appeared in a promise speech before (13:15), it is emphasized here in the parallel phrases "eternal covenant" לִבְרִית עוֹלָם (v. 7, reiterated in vv. 13, 19) and "eternal possession" לַאֲחֻזַּת עוֹלָם (v. 8). The word "possession," or "holding," (אֲחֻזָּה) is itself new in the narrative, and implies legal ownership by acquisition, as evident from its use in the account of Abraham's land purchase in 23: 4, 9, 20.[36] What is promised as a legal possession in perpetuity is the land, which is given two descriptors new to the promise speeches: the land of sojourn, and the land of Canaan. The two identifications of the land are placed in grammatical

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[35] On the formula of self-introduction used here, see Van Seters, *Abraham*, 287.

[36] See Habel, 99, 123. Wenham cites Lev. 25:34 in his translation of the term as "inalienable property." Hamilton further defines the term as "inalienable property received from a sovereign, or at least from one who has the power to release or retain land." The term is common to the Priestly source. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 22; Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 613.

parallel as synonymous: אֶת אֶרֶץ מְגֻרֶיךָ אֵת כָּל־אֶרֶץ כְּנַעַן (v. 8). A look at the broader structure surrounding this phrase in vv. 7-9 reveals a loosely chiastic structure:[37]

A וַהֲקִמֹתִי אֶת־בְּרִיתִי בֵּינִי וּבֵינֶךָ וּבֵין זַרְעֲךָ אַחֲרֶיךָ לְדֹרֹתָם לִבְרִית עוֹלָם
I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you for their generations, to be an everlasting covenant,

B לִהְיוֹת לְךָ לֵאלֹהִים וּלְזַרְעֲךָ אַחֲרֶיךָ to be God to you and to your offspring after you

C וְנָתַתִּי לְךָ וּלְזַרְעֲךָ אַחֲרֶיךָ I will give to you and to your offspring after you

D אֵת אֶרֶץ מְגֻרֶיךָ the land of your sojourn

D-doubled אֵת כָּל־אֶרֶץ כְּנַעַן all the land of Canaan

C' לַאֲחֻזַּת עוֹלָם as an eternal possession

B' וְהָיִיתִי לָהֶם לֵאלֹהִים and I will be God to them…

A' בְּרִיתִי תִשְׁמֹר אַתָּה וְזַרְעֲךָ אַחֲרֶיךָ לְדֹרֹתָם Keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you for their generations

The concentric structure directs attention to the land, which lies at its center. The land is described using two phrases, both of them objects dependent on the same verb, and both made up of seven syllables each. The designation of the land in the paired phrases D-D as "the land of your sojourn," underscored by its definition as "the land of Canaan," emphasizes the current status of the land. It is a land where Abraham is an alien, and it belongs to another people, the Canaanites. The two phrases C-C' which bracket the center, however, emphasize the future status of the land: it will be an eternal possession, given by God to Abraham and his offspring. The next level in the structure, B-B', encloses the gift of the land within the promise of divine accompaniment. This in turn is bounded by the pairs A-A' which designate the whole as a covenant, established by God with Abraham and his offspring throughout their generations. The wider narrative of ch. 17 also emphasizes covenant, with two further references to covenant in the verses preceding this passage (vv. 2, 4), and eight following it (vv. 10, 11, 13, 14, 19, 21).

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[37] S.E. McEvenue proposes an alternative chiastic structure spanning vv. 1-8, but admits that he leaves out the land promise in order to effect the symmetry. P.R.Williamson proposes a parallel structure in vv. 7-8 that is elegant, but does not include the phrases "the land of your sojourn, all the land of Canaan." Sean E. McEvenue, *The Narrative Style of the Priestly Writer*, AnBib 50 (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1971), 163; Williamson, 172.

The speech is dominated by strong language of promise and belonging. The introduction of the terms "eternal" and "holding," as noted above, augments the past promise speeches with new dimensions of both longevity and formality. The formula "to be your God" emphasizes the election of Abraham's descendants for a distinctive relationship with the deity.[38] The positive pairs A-A', B-B', and C-C' also share a linguistic feature, the striking frequency of the particle לְ meaning "to" or "for," which occurs 11 times in the three verses. While לְ serves a variety of grammatical uses in these verses, overall it "expresses the idea of relation."[39] Its repeated use here creates a textual web of relatedness, in which the land, Abraham, his offspring, and God all interrelate by ties of belonging. Still, however, at the center of the arrangement stands a jarring contrast to the vision of eternal possession. The inner pair D-D contains no לְ particle and uses no vocabulary of possession. The core of the structure, rather, presents a disjunction: present sojourn in a land that belongs to someone else, set over and against the future giving, accompaniment, belonging, and possession that will last until eternity, and for generations to come. Von Rad calls the complex idea communicated by sojourn here a "curiously broken" relationship of the patriarchs to the land.[40]

On the one hand, the language of promise in this verse surrounds and almost eclipses the language of sojourn, making the future vision of landed hope a filter through which the present reality of alien sojourn is viewed. In the literary structure of the verse, the positive future brackets the negative present and re-defines it. The land of sojourn will become—of all things—an eternal possession, alien status changed to entitlement and impermanence transformed to permanence. The change is effected by the authoritative gifting of God. The text's focus here on the strong relations between God, the people, and the land accords well with Smith's myth of ethnic election in which territory and *ethnie* are authoritatively bound together by an account of divine appointment.

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[38] This phrase represents the "covenant formula;" R. Rendtorff argues that Yahweh being God for Israel is "the substance of the covenant." Wenham describes the covenant announced here as a charter for Israel's existence and national character, legitimizing its claim to the land of Canaan and to a distinctive relationship with God. Rolf Rendtorff, *Die 'Bundesformel': Eine exegetisch-theologische Untersuchung*, SBS 160 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1995), 20, 60 (ET Rolf Rendtorff, *The Covenant Formula: An Exegetical and Theological Investigation*, trans. Margaret Kohl, OTS [Edinburgh: T. &T. Clark, 1998], 15, 58); Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 30-31.

[39] Paul Joüon, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, trans. T. Muraoka, SubBi 14, vol. II (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1996), § 133d.

[40] German "merkwürdig gebrochene Verhältnis;" von Rad, *Genesis*, 169 (ET, 195).

On the other hand, the assertion of sojourn and Canaanite possession of the land stands, still, at the center of the text, and cannot be fully eclipsed. The structure of the passage, in fact, draws specific attention to the odd contrast it poses. In this focal point the land does not belong to the *ethnie*; the relationship between the two is tenuous, and the *ethnie* itself is peripheral in relation to another *ethnie* that does actually possess the land. Both the language of the text and the reality it points to depict an uneasy juxtaposition. Sojourn here seems to militate against the strengthening of ethnic ties to the land. What role is sojourn playing in the ethnic myth? We may begin to answer this question by comparison of this text with ch. 15.

The function of sojourn in this text bears similarities to and differences from its function in ch. 15. There, sojourn represented the relationship of Israel to an outside land, Egypt. Outside of Canaan, Israel is in a negative state of sojourn, and this portrayal serves to highlight the strong positive ties that exist by contrast between the *ethnie* and its rightful territory, Canaan. Here, however, sojourn represents the relationship of Israel to the land itself which is destined to be its own. The negativity of sojourn is brought inside the homeland, so to speak. However, although sojourn is transferred to a new spatial sphere, that of Canaan, its temporal aspect is similar to that of ch. 15, for it is still portrayed as temporary. Abraham sojourns in Canaan now, but the promise speech envisions a future when the strong language of possession will be actualized. Sojourn in Canaan, as in Egypt, will resolve into possession. In ch. 15 sojourn in Egypt resolved into possession in Canaan; here in ch. 17 present sojourn in Canaan resolves into future possession in Canaan.

We may thus discern an aspect of sojourn in ch. 17 that parallels its functions in ch. 15. In both texts the *ethnie* experiences a temporary status of inferiority to another *ethnie*, which is to be reversed by a future action of the deity who has chosen the *ethnie* and allotted them a territory of their own. The drama of reversal spotlights the divine election of the *ethnie*, both here and in ch. 15, and thus reinforces ethnic identity. In this sense the sojourn language in chs. 15 and 17 fulfills a similar function.

Ch. 17 augments the sojourn language of ch. 15, however, by introducing an element of alienation into Israel's relationship with Canaan itself, however temporary that alienation may be. This element was not a part of the picture of sojourn painted in ch. 15, where the contrast between Canaan and Egypt forms a straightforward

polarity of belonging vs. sojourn. In ch. 17 Canaan is problematized, functioning both as future home and present not-home. The emphasis in ch. 17 on Abraham's beginnings as a sojourner in Canaan connects with the narrative portrayal in ch. 12 of his origins in Mesopotamia, and the content of the first promise speech in 12:1-3 which calls Abraham away from his *native* land to a new land *God* will reveal. In both forms, narrative and promise speech, the text of Genesis insists: Israel is not autochthonous. While the future will bring a bond of possession between territory and *ethnie*, *it was not always so*. According to Genesis, there was a time when Israel and its land were not indissolubly bound.

What does this claim of outside origins accomplish for Israel's ethnic identity? A thread of scholarly discussion has probed this question, although not with explicit focus on the language of sojourn. My suggestions below will interact with some of the ideas that have surfaced in this discussion.

1) A claim of outside origins distinguishes the genealogy of Israel from that of the peoples in the land. The concern for a distinct line of descent is illustrated by the return to Mesopotamia, the place of origin, in order to secure endogamous marriage partners for Isaac and Jacob (24:3-4; 28:1-2), and by the text's negative portrayal of Esau's exogamous marriages (26:34; 27:46; 28:8-9).[41] Several scholars have proposed this idea. Hiebert, for example, suggests it briefly.[42] K.W. Whitelam analyzes examples of origin stories that include migration accounts, in addition to that of Israel. He finds that outside origins are often used in order to establish prestigious ancestry, or as a vehicle of hostility toward other peoples with competing claims to the ethnic territory.[43] Thompson suggests that the marriage stories of the patriarchs and the tradition of their origin in Mesopotamia communicate that Israel is "not to be identified with the Canaanites," but goes on to claim that the Hebrew bible

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[41] The politics of marriage and sexual interaction will receive further attention below in the analysis of 28:3.

[42] Hiebert, 96.

[43] Whitelam does not believe, however, that this is the rationale for Israel's claim of outside origins; rather, he restricts the rationale to the issue of concrete land claims. This follows from his narrowing of his argument about Israel's outside origin in two ways. First, he considers the exodus and conquest traditions alone as Israel's tradition of external origin and makes no reference to the stories of patriarchal origins in Mesopotamia. Second, he links the tradition of Israel's outside origins exclusively to the post-exilic period, finding its rationale in the socio-political needs of the returning exiles to establish land claims over and against the claims of those who remained in the land. On both counts his argument is artificially narrowed, to the exclusion of other significant data. See Keith W. Whitelam, "Israel's Traditions of Origin: Reclaiming the Land," *JSOT* 44 (1989): 30-31.

portrays Israel as indigenous to the land and that these tales about the patriarchs are a "paradox" in the context of a broader tradition of autochthony.[44]

P. Machinist makes a stronger argument for the significance of what he calls "outsider stories."[45] He finds that these stories communicate:

> …sharp differentiation between Israel and other inhabitants of the land, whether understood as autochthonous or also as outsiders. In this perspective…Israel enters the land already as a distinctive social and cultural group—in other words, as a group formed outside of the contamination emanating from the other inhabitants of the land. Contamination, thus, is a basic fear, perhaps most pervasive in, but by no means exclusive to, the Deuteronomic corpus; and interestingly, that fear centers not really on the other inhabitants that the Bible recognizes as outsiders and new—Philistines, Aramaeans, etc.—but on those denominated as old, if not autochthonous, and often broadly categorized as Canaanites.[46]

Although Machinist's argument is based on the exodus tradition,[47] he highlights an element of ethnic distinctiveness associated with outside origins that is helpful in interpreting the patriarchal stories as well. Smith notes that myths of migration involve the exclusion of indigenous peoples from the providential destiny of the *ethnie*.[48] Using Smith's terms and building on the observations of scholars above, we can observe that a tradition of outside origins would serve to maintain a myth of origin and descent clearly distinct from that of other *ethnies*, and would thus help Israel to define its ethnic boundaries and to clarify its presence in Canaan vis-à-vis other *ethnies* occupying the same territory. While the scholars above locate this focus most strongly in the other books of the Pentateuch, we may note the initiation of this idea in Genesis, introduced by the concept of sojourn and its indication of distinct origins for Israel that differentiate it from the other peoples in the land.

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[44] Thompson, *Origin*, 34. What Thompson means by the statement that Israel is "indigenous" is that it exists in the place "where God first intended it to live as a nation," in "the homeland chosen from them by their god." His emphasis on Canaan as the correct location of Israel's ethnic self-realization is correct, but his argument for this fact obscures another aspect of Israel's territorial identification. While Canaan is indeed the ethnoscape that is linked with Israel's ethnic definition from the start, it is not depicted as its place of origin. Thompson's vocabulary is insufficiently nuanced, obscuring a distinction which is highlighted as significant in the text. Thompson, *Origin*, 80.

[45] Peter Machinist, " Outsiders or Insiders: The Biblical View of Emergent Israel and Its Contexts," in *The Other in Jewish Thought and History: Constructions of Jewish Culture and Identity*, ed. Laurence J. Silberstein and Robert L. Cohn, New Perspectives in Jewish Studies (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 50-51.

[46] Ibid., 49.

[47] Machinist mentions the patriarchal stories only briefly. Ibid., 42.

[48] Smith, *Myths*, 136-38.

2) A tradition of outside origins formulates the connection of the *ethnie* to its land as a function of divine gift, an emphasis which in turn reinforces a sense of ethnic election. Machinist clarifies this point in another essay where he highlights a contrast between traditions of autochthony in Egypt and Mesopotamia vs. a tradition of "marginality" in Israel. Machinist sees the negative value of marginality transformed by the biblical tradition into a positive picture demonstrating the divine choice of Israel.[49] He comments that "the status of new and outsider…became the mark and proof of a special divine chosenness—its very marginality vis-à-vis the older cultures constituting the basis for replacing them."[50] The tradition of outside origins proved a central and productive notion for Israel's self-image, contributing to the making of a "counter-identity" in relation to the older cultures surrounding it.[51] Smith also notes that the affirmation of lowly origins can legitimize status for an *ethnie*.[52] Machinist's interpretation accords well with Smith's concept of ethnic election.

Weinfeld also highlights the contrast between the origin stories of Israel and that of "the big autochthonous cultures" as attested in cognate literature from Mesopotamia, the Hittites, and the Egyptians. He makes a typological comparison between the figures of Abraham and Aeneas, positing a shared genre of "foundation story" between Israel and Greece. Weinfeld attributes the migration pattern in these national epics, however, to the basis of these two cultures in "colonization and the founding of new states," i.e., to a concrete historical basis, and leaves unexamined the rationale for emphasizing migration as an element of ethnic identity.[53] Smith finds a similar parallel between the migration/colonization origins of Israel and Greece, but focuses only briefly on the "sense of group history and unity" arising in their respective traditions.[54]

My reading of Genesis through the lens of Smith's ideas finds that outside origins make the most sense in light of concepts of ethnic election. Generally

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[49] Peter Machinist, "The Question of Distinctiveness in Ancient Israel: An Essay," in *Ah, Assyria…Studies in Assyrian History and Ancient Near Eastern Historiography Presented to Hayim Tadmor*, ed. Mordechai Cogan and Israel Eph'al, Scripta Hierosolymitana 32 (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1991), 210-11.

[50] Machinist, "Outsiders," 51.

[51] Machinist, "Question," 211.

[52] Smith, *Myths*, 59.

[53] Weinfeld, "Promise to the Patriarchs," 353-54, 368-69.

[54] Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Revival in the Modern World*, ed. Jack Goody and Geoffrey Hawthorn, Themes in the Social Sciences (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 71.

speaking, Smith's analysis of ethnic myth reveals a prevalent claim of autochthony in the legitimization of ethnic ties to territory.[55] In the cases where outside origins are claimed, however, Smith's explanation of ethnic election can illuminate the logic at work in the myth. Here the tie between the *ethnie* and its territory is not natural or primordial; rather, it is set up by divine command.[56] Thus it is a specific act of the deity which intervenes in the natural order to choose an *ethnie* and a territory for belonging together. In this way, a tradition of divine election frames the *ethnie's* association with the land as divinely mandated. The vision of the ethnoscape is thus more complex, but it is also quite strong. In Israel's case, a tradition of origin outside of Canaan envisions the relationship of the *ethnie* to the land as a matter of divine appointment, thus strengthening Israel's ethnic identity as an *ethnie* chosen by God. The promise speech of ch. 17 confirms this ethnic election and appointment of Canaan as Israel's divinely granted territory, at the same time that it emphasizes ancestral sojourn in Canaan. Sojourn in Canaan is not in conflict with the appointment of this land as Israel's ethnoscape; it is in perfect harmony with the election myth, rather, and even serves to intensify it.

3) A tradition of outside origins also gives the bond between *ethnie* and territory a flexibility that serves the endurance of ethnic identity. Smith notes that it is not physical presence in a homeland which matters for ethnic identification, but rather the mythical and subjective aspects of attachment; "…what is crucial for ethnicity is not the possession of the homeland, but the sense of mutual belonging, even from afar."[57] Positing outside origins de-emphasizes questions of sovereignty and ownership in the land as indicators of ethnic belonging, stressing instead the element of ethnic election noted above. When sovereignty or ownership of the land become threatened, therefore, ethnic connection to the land can still remain strong.[58]

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[55] Smith, *Chosen*, 36-37.

[56] This emphasis coheres with the perspective of Deut. 6:10-12 and Josh. 24:13, which depict in vivid imagery the "outsider" relationship of Israel to its land, although in the framework of the conquest period. The specific use of sojourn as a signal of outside origins also continues beyond Genesis in references to the land as God's gift and Israel's status in it as sojourners (e.g., Lev. 25:23; 1 Chr. 16:19; 29:15; Ps. 39:13; 105:12).

[57] Smith, "Sources," 51.

[58] The emphasis in ch. 17 on circumcision as the sign of the covenant complements this flexibility introduced by sojourn. As a marker of ethnic identity, circumcision is portable; i.e., practicable irrespective of territorial location, unlike other elements of Israel's law which could not be separated from life in the land. The accord between sojourn and its related themes on the one hand, and concerns relevant for exilic and post-exilic thought on the other, is once again apparent.

As Smith observes, "an *ethnie* may persist, even when long divorced from its homeland, through an intense nostalgia and spiritual attachment."[59]

Again, Machinist's comments are helpful in this regard. He observes that a tradition of outside origins shows "that the land that the Bible understands as home had to *become* Israel and, thus, that the community of Israel can exist apart from this land…"[60] This "sense of contingency" served Israel well over time, for "it came to mirror the actual course of Israel's history, offering hope that crises are never permanent, yet caution that triumph and security can never simply be taken for granted, and finally, a heightened awareness of the boundaries necessary for group survival."[61] Machinist's interpretation emphasizes ethnic identity, although he does not use the terminology. He shows that outsider stories help an *ethnie* to withstand periods of alienation from its land, as it is able to view crises of dispossession as temporary and to rely on alternate resources of ethnic identity for group survival in such times. Westermann supports this interpretation with his observation that sojourn in this text is meant not only as a descriptor of Abraham's status in Canaan, but also as a message to a later audience that "it is always possible for Israel to be an alien."[62] That Israel could lose possession of the land, and become once again alien in relation to it, is a contingency built into the essential logic of the ethnic myth by an emphasis on ancestral sojourn. Thus sojourn, while negative, is not a grave threat to ethnic identity. The resulting flexibility in Israel's relationship to its land imbues it with a resilience that contributes to a stronger ethnic identity overall.

All three rationales for outside origins above emphasize ethnic election as understood by Smith. Outside origins set up a complex relationship between Israel and its land, which can nevertheless offer resources for a strong and flexible ethnic identity. Thus sojourn in Canaan as presented in ch. 17, although it problematizes the relationship between territory and *ethnie*, paradoxically strengthens ethnic identity through the intensification of a sense of ethnic election. Ethnic election serves as a bridge concept between the *ethnie* and its land, such that the loss of the land is not a fatal blow to ethnic identity, as long as divine election of the *ethnie* is still in place. This conceptual bracketing of land within election is visually represented by the

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[59] Smith, *National*, 23; Smith, *Origins*, 184-85.
[60] Machinist, "Outsiders," 49; Machinist, "Question," 208-09.
[61] Machinist, "Outsiders," 54.
[62] Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 317 (ET, 263).

structure of the promise speech in 17:7-9, as shown above.[63] Sojourn, once again, can be seen to strengthen Israel's ethnic identity through an interpretation that highlights its relationship to ethnic election.

Genesis 26:3

The third reference to sojourn in a promise speech occurs in a theophany at the outset of the third wife-sister tale. All three wife-sister tales (chs. 12, 20, and 26) contain sojourn references, but only in this tale does the sojourn reference appear in the form of a promise speech (the references to sojourn in the first two tales occur in the form of itinerary notices discussed in Chapter Two).

In contrast with the two promise texts discussed in this chapter thus far, the promise speech in 26:2-5 is set within a narrative episode that develops elements of character and plot beyond the time frame of the theophany itself. In keeping with this structure, the discussion of this text is divided into three parts: (1) a study of the sojourn command itself in v. 3; (2) an investigation of the sojourn command within the structure of the promise speech in vv. 2-5, and (3) an examination of the promise speech within the larger narrative structure of ch. 26.

A. The Command to Sojourn

The divine appearance to Isaac occurs while he is in Gerar (26:1). Isaac's location is in fact a primary concern of the promise speech, which begins (vv. 2-3) with three commands, a jussive verb and two imperatives, all conveying the directive to Isaac to stay where he is:[64]

Do not go down to Egypt;	אַל־תֵּרֵד מִצְרָיְמָה
settle in the land that I tell you;	שְׁכֹן בָּאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֹמַר אֵלֶיךָ
sojourn in this land.	גּוּר בָּאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת

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[63] Westermann similarly observes that the literary "enclosing" of the land promise within the promise of divine presence means that the vital priority for Israel is its relationship to God, which stands even if it is a people expelled from the land. Ibid., 316 (ET, 262-63).

[64] Some commentators (e.g. Driver and J. Skinner) observe a disjunction between the two commands "settle" and "sojourn." Others (e.g., Speiser, B. Vawter, Wenham, and Hamilton) find the sequence logical, often suggesting the translation "camp" for the first command. See Driver, *Genesis*, 250; Skinner, 364; Speiser, *Genesis*, 201; Vawter, 291, 293; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 189; Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 193, 195.

This is the first—and only—occurrence of sojourn in the imperative form. To probe the land ideology in this command to Isaac, some clarification is necessary about the specific location involved. Is Gerar, the place where Isaac must stay, portrayed as a location within the land of promise? Is it, in Smith's terms, territory designated by the election myth as the arena of Israel's ethnic identification? There are a number of textual clues to explore in search of the answer to this question.

1) Gerar is a place of sojourn, with the word play between the name "Gerar" (גְּרָר) and the verb for sojourn (גּוּר) heightening the connection. The reference to sojourn cannot single-handedly resolve the status of Gerar, however, since Canaan itself can be designated a place of sojourn, as in 17:8, and areas outside Canaan are candidates for sojourn as well, as in 15:13. Is Isaac's sojourn in Gerar more similar to sojourn in Egypt, a negative foil to life in the promised land, or to sojourn in Canaan, which is life in the promised land, but with the promise as yet unfulfilled?

2) The promise of the land to Isaac twice includes a peculiar plural, "all these lands" (26:3, 4).[65] The construction raises the possibility that Gerar has been added to the territory previously promised.[66] Commentators differ in their interpretations of this phrase.[67] It seems likely, however, that the speech points to the inclusion of Gerar in the promised land, whether or not it previously was.

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[65] LXX has "this land" instead of the plural construction in both instances. J.W. Wevers notes that this translation simplifies and normalizes the odd plural. John William Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Genesis*, SBLSCS 35 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1993), 399.

[66] Gen. 10:19 sets the boundary of Canaan north of Gerar; Num. 34:3-6 extends the boundary further south, including Gerar in the promised land, as does the expansive description in Gen. 15:18. Egyptian 13th c. descriptions coincide with that of Numbers. See Yohanan Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography*, trans. A.F. Rainey (London: Burns and Oates, 1967), 63, 69-70.

[67] Turner states that Gerar is newly incorporated into the promised land by this grant to Isaac, which means that Isaac never leaves the promised land. Coats, J.H. Sailhamer, and Wenham also believe "all these lands" extends the promise beyond Canaan. A. Dillmann interprets the plural to indicate different parts of the future land of Israel, so that the promise here assures Isaac's descendants possession of the land in its widest sense. Vawter believes "this land" and "these lands" do not refer to Gerar, but to the land previously promised to Abraham in 15:18-21; Isaac's sojourn in Gerar, then, is a departure from the promised land. Hamilton reasons that the interpretation of the lands promised depends upon Isaac's location when he receives the promise. On this he prevaricates: if v. 2 follows v. 1 chronologically, then Isaac is in Gerar and "these lands" include Gerar, but v. 1 may be the story of vv. 2-11 in capsule form, with the particulars spelled out in vv. 2-11. Mullen believes Gerar was a "foreign" land, and connects this emphasis in the text to an exilic agenda. Turner, 110; Coats, *Genesis*, 189; Sailhamer, 187; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 189-90; August Dillmann, *Die Genesis erklärt*, 4th ed. (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1882), 305 (ET August Dillmann, *Genesis Critically and Exegetically Expounded*, trans. William B. Stevenson, vol. 2 [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1897], 203); Vawter, 291; Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 192; Mullen, 149.

3) The command to Isaac resembles commands in the other promise speeches. Of the 17 promise speeches directly reported in the patriarchal narratives,[68] 13 have an associated command.[69] The commands display a strong predominance of verbs expressing locative action: הלך√ , "go" (12:1; 13:17; 17:1; 22:2); קום√, "rise" (13:17; 21:18; 35:1); שוב√, "return" (16:9; 31:3); ירד√ "go down" (26:2; 46:3); עלה√, "go up" (35:1); ישב√ "dwell" (35:1); שכן√, "settle" (26:2); and גור√, "sojourn" (26:3). These locative commands are frequently paired with the word אֶרֶץ, "land": אֶל־הָאָרֶץ (12:1); בָּאָרֶץ (13:17;26:2-3 [x2]); אֶל־אֶרֶץ (22:2; 31:3). An additional specification is the description of the land as a location God will reveal: "I will show you," אֲשֶׁר אַרְאֶךָ (12:1); "I will tell you" אֲשֶׁר אֹמַר אֵלֶיךָ (22:2; 26:2). The promise speeches, then, display a tendency to couple the divine promises with a directive from God requiring geographical movement.[70] The command to Isaac parallels the locative commands to the patriarchs, all of which direct their steps toward an ultimate goal *within* the land of promise.[71] The emphasis on a divinely-selected location toward which God directs the patriarch is highlighted by the phrase "the land I will tell you" in v. 2, which parallels the phrase "the land I will show you" in the first promise speech to Abraham (12:1). Thus Gerar here occupies a position that is parallel to, if not identical with, the land of promise.

4) The prohibition against going to Egypt expressed in v. 2 seems to set the experience in Gerar in contrast with a visit to Egypt. Scholars have suggested various reasons for the "surprising"[72] proscription here.[73] Certainly it stands out in sharp

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[68] 12:1-3; 12:7; 13:14-17; ch.15; 16:9-12; ch. 17; 18:10, 14; 21:12-13; 21:17-18; 22:2, 16-18; 25:23; 26:2-5; 26:24; 28:13-15; 31:3; 35:1, 11-12 46:3-4.

[69] The exceptions are 12:7; 18:10, 14; 25:23; 28:13-15.

[70] Westermann calls attention to directional commands as a group, which includes in his view 12:1-3; 26:2-3; 31:3; 32:10; 46:1-3. He believes that the commands to depart, remain, or return to locations specified by God correspond to nomadic lifestyle and religion, but offers no overall interpretation of how the locative imperatives function in the current narratives. Albertz divides the locative commands of the promise speeches into two groups, each associated with a separate redactor during the exilic era, and expressing a different stance toward existence outside of Palestine. Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 169 (ET, 147); Albertz, *Exilszeit*, 193, 196-97, 207 (ET, 249, 254-55, 267).

[71] The exception is the command to Jacob not to fear going down to Egypt (46:3). It is given, however, with the caveat that God is going to bring him back up again to Canaan, so God's instructions to Jacob here do include an ultimate directive toward location in Canaan.

[72] See von Rad, *Genesis*, 235 (ET, 265).

[73] Janzen suggests the possibility of a belated critique of Abraham's move to Egypt. Albertz links the prohibition to the exilic period, arguing that an exilic redactor was here making the case that emigration to Egypt contravened God's will. R. Davidson and N.M. Sarna connect the embargo on Isaac to the land promise. There is no explicit textual evidence, however, that travel to Egypt endangers the promise. Janzen, *Abraham*, 99; Albertz, *Exilszeit*, 202 (ET, 261); Davidson, 126-27; Sarna, 171-72.

relief against the backdrop of the two other famine-induced patriarchal visits to Egypt: Abraham's foray, when he pauses at the border but receives no vision of a divinity averting his descent (12:11), and Jacob's trip, when God appears at the border and gives express permission for departure, with the proviso that a return will be forthcoming (46:1-4). Both these trips are linked with the exodus, as will be discussed in Chapter Four. Here, however, an Egyptian sojourn is not on the divine agenda for Isaac. He is, rather, to sojourn in Gerar. This narrative contrast with a descent to Egypt suggests that Isaac's sojourn in Gerar is of a different nature, *ideologically* speaking. It is not a departure from the promised land, framed by the language of exit and return as in 12:10-13:1; 15:13-14; and 46:1-4. Rather, Isaac is stopped in his tracks at the border, before the departure. He may be in a zone that is geographically ambiguous, but the text leads us to believe that he is still within the circle of the land that is promised. Gerar, then, seems to relate to the divine promise differently from Egypt. Isaac's sojourn in Gerar is not like the sojourn in Egypt, where removal from the promised land awaits resolution and return. Rather, it is like sojourn in Canaan, where life within a land not yet possessed awaits the fulfillment of the promise. Isaac in his sojourn awaits not a change of location, but a change of status.

What then is the logic of the promise speech? God does not desire that Isaac sojourn in Egypt, an experience with its own particular set of associations. He does, however, desire that Isaac locate himself in the land to which God directs him. In this land, Isaac is to live as a sojourner. In return, God will give to Isaac a number of benefits, among them the future possession of the land(s). Isaac, then, is to live in a very particular relationship with his location: the land where he is to live is selected for him by God, it is possessed by another (Isaac sojourns), and Isaac awaits a future possession of it. How may we benefit from Smith's ethnic theory in interpreting this text?

The logic of the sojourn reference here seems at first glance to resemble strongly that of the sojourn reference in ch. 17. In the promise speech of ch. 17 Abraham's status as a sojourner in Canaan highlighted a sacred link to the territory of Canaan. His sojourn indicated outside origins, and thus pointed to the divine selection of the land as the location for the realization of Israel's communal identity. In the context of the Abraham narrative, the text of ch. 17 harmonizes closely with the account of Abraham's relocation from his land of origin, Haran, to the land

chosen for him by God. Here a similar designation of outside origin is emphasized for Isaac as well.[74] Thus sojourn here affirms the election myth of Israel in the same way that the reference in ch. 17 did. Isaac's sojourner status drives home once again the point that Isaac did not naturally possess the land, but received it by divine promise—i.e. Israel's connection to its territory is not autochthonous (natural), but sacred (divinely initiated). Something additional is happening in this text, however, that extends the significance of sojourn further, beyond its connotation in ch. 17. To probe this further dimension, a broader examination of the textual context is required, first in the promise speech as a whole, and then in the narrative setting of ch. 26.

B. Sojourn and the Structure of the Promise

The promise speech to Isaac begins with three commands:

Do not go down to Egypt;	אַל־תֵּרֵד מִצְרָיְמָה
settle in the land that I tell you;	שְׁכֹן בָּאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֹמַר אֵלֶיךָ
sojourn in this land.	גּוּר בָּאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת

These instructions to Isaac are followed by three promises in the first person singular imperfect,[75] directed toward a second person singular pronominal object of the preposition or verb (v. 3):[76]

And I will be with you,	וְאֶהְיֶה עִמְּךָ
and I will bless you,	וַאֲבָרְכֶךָּ
for to you and to your offspring I will give all these lands.	כִּי־לְךָ וּלְזַרְעֲךָ אֶתֵּן אֶת־כָּל־הָאֲרָצֹת הָאֵל[77]

The structural juxtaposition of the three commands and the three promises creates a tight structure of reciprocity. What is expected of Isaac on the one hand, and what God will deliver on the other, are both clear and concise. The terse series expresses a straightforward correlation: if Isaac follows the divine instruction, God

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[74] It can be argued that Gerar was a place of sojourn for Isaac because he did not own land there, or that it was not, because he was born there. Sojourn in this text, however, seems to be an ideological category related primarily to the structure of the promise and to the broad horizon of ethnic identity, rather than a sociological description of Isaac's concrete status.

[75] Coats points out that the construction of the first promise as a verbal sentence here differs from its usual nominal pattern. Coats, *Genesis*, 189.

[76] In the third promise the recipient is Isaac (as indicated by the second person singular pronoun) but also his offspring, with the same pronoun attached at the end of the word זרע.

[77] הָאֵל is an orthographic variation of אֵלֶּה with the article, occurring eight times in the MT. See Brown, Driver, and Briggs, 41.

will bestow upon him a three-fold grant (blessing, accompaniment, and land). Each list of three concludes with a reference to land, "this land" in the first series and "these lands" in the second (both v. 3).

The second part of the promise speech is wordier and its structure less crisp. Two references to Abraham bracket the content, in v. 3 and v. 5:

v. 3 And I will fulfill the oath that I swore to Abraham your father…

v. 5 …because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.

Here four promises are made, each starting with a waw-consecutive perfect verb (vv. 3-4):

And I will fulfill the oath that I swore to Abraham your father,	וַהֲקִמֹתִי
and I will multiply your offspring like the stars of heaven,	וְהִרְבֵּיתִי
and I will give to your offspring all these lands,	וְנָתַתִּי
and by your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed…	וְהִתְבָּרֲכוּ

This time Isaac is not the object of the promises. In the first promise the recipient is Abraham his father, and in the subsequent three promises the recipients are his offspring, the word itself repeated three times in a rhythmic cadence. The four promises are balanced in the final verse by the four elements that Abraham "kept," the charge, commandments, statutes, and laws of God. The logic of the connection is clarified by the conjunction עֵקֶב (because), showing that the promises will be fulfilled *as the result of* Abraham's obedient action.

The overall structure of the promise speech can be mapped thus:

Three commands for Isaac to obey

    Three promises to Isaac

    Four promises (to Abraham/to Isaac's offspring)

Four requirements that Abraham obeyed

Within this structure, the cause/effect relationship between action and promise is repeated, with the order of appearance reversed the second time. In the first section Isaac is given three commands, on condition of which God will grant three promised gifts. In the second section God promises four gifts, as a result of Abraham's past fulfillment of his four requirements. In this promise speech, then, human obedience is presented as the required condition for the fulfillment of the promises.

Once again, comparing this text with the wider group of promise speeches proves illuminating. Two relevant patterns may be discerned in these speeches. First, in chs. 22 and 35 the divine command is given first, after which the narrative reports the execution of the command, and then the promises are spoken in a subsequent theophany. Ch. 22 connects the promise directly to the obedience reported in the narrative (22:16 "because you have done this thing"). Ch. 35 does not make a verbal connection, but the narrative order suggests it. The logical sequence appearing in these two texts seems to parallel the sense of the second part of the promise speech in 26:2-5, where the promises are made with reference to an obedience that has already been fulfilled (here, Abraham's). The logic is that of a result or a reward for obedience to a command.

Second, in 12:1-3; 16:9-12; 17:1-2; 26:2-5; and 31:3, a directive from God is immediately followed by a promise introduced with the conjunction וְ and an imperfect verb,[78] recounting what it is that God will do for the recipient.[79] The sequence here is that of command and conditional response. The obedience has not yet occurred, and the promise is made provisionally in expectation of the execution of the command. This is the structure of the command to Isaac, appearing in the first section of the promise speech.

The conditional logic in both parts of this promise speech, then, has continuity with patterns evident in the other promise speeches.[80] Divine promises are often made either in response to past obedience, or in expectation of future obedience. The promise speeches also show a tendency for the required obedience to take the form of locative action, as is the case here in the command to Isaac.

Commentators have not always affirmed the presence of conditional logic in the promises. Covenant theology has traditionally emphasized the eternality and unconditionality of the promises to Abraham, in parallel with the Davidic covenant,

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[78] Wenham notes that the conjunction indicates purpose or consequence and translates it "so that," a translation which highlights the conditional relationship between the command and promise. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 275; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 189.

[79] 16:9-12 is slightly different, employing an infinitive absolute, but the promise does closely follow the command.

[80] W. Yarchin also traces a conditional pattern of imperative/promise in many of the promises to Abraham as well as the promises to Isaac in ch. 26. The analysis here overlaps with but does not duplicate his study. William Yarchin, "Imperative and Promise in Genesis 12:1-3," *Studia Biblica et Theologica* 19 (1980): 173-74, 178 n. 50.

both of which are likened to the "royal grant" recorded in Hittite documents.[81] Interpretation of the promise texts that accent human behavior is thus obliged to make distinctions that are not always persuasive.[82] Weinfeld, for example, describes the behavioral elements of the Abrahamic promises in JE and P as "presupposed," "prerequisite," and "an expectation," yet persists in maintaining they are "not a condition."[83]

Other scholars are more willing to identify a conditional framework in the promise speeches, although opinions differ as to the specific texts and/or textual sources which might employ such logic. The promise to Isaac in 26:2-5 is generally viewed as conditional, although many commentators focus on the second portion which cites Abraham's obedience, rather than the first portion containing the commands to Isaac.[84] Hamilton, for example, detects conditional logic in verses 3-5 and finds it in 22:16-18 as well, pointing only to Abraham's obedience in both cases, and contrasts it with the majority of the promise speeches which are "announced unconditionally."[85] Turner, however, specifically points to the sojourn command to Isaac as the condition for fulfillment of the accompanying promises, and also maintains that the fulfillment of the covenant promises to Abraham was often made conditional upon Abraham's obedience, citing as examples 12.1-3; 17.1-2; and 22.15-17.[86] Mullen states that the promise to Isaac in 26:2-5 was clearly not unconditional,[87] and voices an objection to the scholarly position that the promises to Abraham were unconditional, arguing instead for the presence of a dialectic: "Yahweh will remain faithful to his promise, but always has the power to revoke it if Abraham or his descendants fail to follow Yahweh's commands."[88] Mullen finds this dialectic to be a basic tension which he believes is "endemic to the narrative

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[81] E.g., Delbert R. Hillers, *Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1969), 98-119; Clements; Weinfeld, "Covenant," 184.

[82] R. Youngblood offers a detailed critique of positions maintaining an unconditional Abrahamic covenant. Ronald Youngblood, "The Abrahamic Covenant: Conditional or Unconditional?," in *The Living and Active Word of God: Studies in Honor of Samuel J. Schultz*, ed. Morris Inch and Ronald Youngblood (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 31-46.

[83] Weinfeld, "Covenant," 195. In the case of the promise to Isaac in 26:2-5, however, Weinfeld does state that the promise is given because of Abraham's obedience. Weinfeld, "Covenant," 185.

[84] Calvin, by contrast, disallows the presence of conditional logic even in the reference to Abraham's obedience. Calvin, 229-30.

[85] Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 194. With regard to ch. 26 Hamilton writes, "A faithful Abraham (v. 5) means a blessed Isaac (vv. 3-4). Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 193.

[86] Turner, 110.

[87] Mullen, 149.

[88] Ibid., 147 n. 70.

presentation of the ways in which the human and divine realms interacts in the biblical materials."[89]

Wenham also cites 26:5 as well as 22:15-18 and 18:19 as examples where the fulfillment of the promise is contingent on obedience. He, like Mullen, finds broad confirmation for such logic in the wider canon: "This pattern of promise-obedience-fulfillment of promise is ubiquitous in Scripture, so for Gunkel and Westermann to claim that the earliest form of the promise was unconditional seems rash. It is integral to OT covenant theology (e.g., Exod 19:4-5)."[90] Wenham's comment draws attention to a further nuance in the discussion, the question of earlier and later development in the promise theme. Some scholars locate the conditional logic apparent in some promise speeches only later in the development of the tradition. The operating premise in this position is that conditional logic is a feature of Deuteronomic or post-Deuteronomic periods, and no earlier. Van Seters, for example, claims that the conditionality of obedience and righteousness is introduced in 15:6; 22:16-18; and 26:3-5; for him this counts as evidence supporting his theory of a post-Deuteronomic, exilic Yahwist.[91] Westermann, on the other hand, uses the criterion of conditional logic as an indicator for later dating. For him the emphasis on obedience in 18:19; 22:15-18; and 26:5 betrays the interests of a later period; he considers them additions or expansions on earlier promise texts. He maintains, "But for the promises that can be assigned with some assurance to the oldest strata, it is in fact characteristic that they are absolute. Any motivation would be inconceivable."[92]

Besides the possible circularity of logic that often besets source criticism and can be invoked in the case above, a further objection can be raised to the restriction of conditional logic within the bounds of late expansions upon the promise texts. The objection is hinted at in the quotes from Mullen and Wenham above, and more strongly stated by Janzen. All three scholars point to the resonance of conditional logic with a chord present on a larger scale outside the promise speeches, and not to be confined to a single source or era in textual development. Janzen writes,

> Genesis 26:5 has all the marks of a late, perhaps Deuteronomistic editor. … Should we then dissociate Isaac from Sinai by neutralizing

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[89] Ibid.

[90] Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 50.

[91] Van Seters, *Prologue*, 240-42. Van Seters also finds conditional logic in 12:1-3, where according to his interpretation, the divine promises depend upon the imperative in v. 1 so they follow only as a consequence of the obedience. Van Seters, *Prologue*, 272 n. 32.

[92] Westermann, *Verheißungen*, 122 (ET, 130).

26:5 through the recognition of its editorial character? Or should we take this verse as indicating that in the very journey of faith set out in chs. 12-25 we are to trace the inner spirit of response to God that, similarly, later moves Israel to observe Sinai's laws? … Is the editorial insertion so finely and smoothly stitched into the older epic narrative as to warn us that though we may make appropriate theological distinctions between Abraham and Moses, we may drive no theological wedge between them?[93]

Janzen's statement highlights the importance of attending to the whole picture in the final form of the text, recognizing that although later additions may be present, it is possible that they have been incorporated in some measure of harmonic resonance with the larger arc of the biblical narrative, as well as with the earlier material of the unit itself. Many scholars attribute the second part of the promise speech in 26:2-5 to a later, usually deuteronomic/deuteronomistic, redactor.[94] What is not often acknowledged is that the first part of the speech exhibits strong conditional logic as well, and that this logic is evident in other promise speeches usually attributed to earlier sources. The discussion below will also aim to show that the narrative continuation of the episode builds on and extends the conditional logic of the promise speech, confirming that the logical framework of conditionality is of vital significance for the understanding of this text.

We return, then, to the sojourn command to Isaac, now with a grasp of its position as the first clause in a framework of conditional promise.[95] In ch. 17 sojourn in Canaan was a fact, a reality that corresponded to Abraham's recent relocation from Haran to Canaan. God promises that this sojourn in Canaan will end, for God will give Abraham (and his offspring) the land of Canaan as their possession. Here in the language of ch. 26, sojourn is not a fact-on-the-ground reported by the promise speech. Here, rather, sojourn is an imperative order. This order, moreover, is constructed in the pattern of significant locative commands to the other patriarchs, which involve a geographical directive carrying symbolic weight, and a divine

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[93] Janzen, *Abraham*, 100-01.

[94] E.g., Delitzsch, *Neuer*, 360 (ET, 138-39); Dillmann, *Die Genesis*, 305 (ET, 202-03); Driver, *Genesis*, 250-51; Gunkel, *Genesis*, 300 (ET, 294); von Rad, *Genesis*, 235 (ET, 265); Scullion, 200; Skinner, 364; Vawter, 291; Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 518 (ET, 424-25). Wenham argues that the phrasing of v. 5 is in line more with priestly than deuteronomic language. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 190.

[95] The second part of the promise speech which cites the obedience of Abraham as the grounds for the promises displays conditional logic, as discussed above. Here, however, the discussion will focus on the conditional logic in the command to Isaac. The second part of the promise speech reinforces the message of the first, but is not the primary object of study at this time.

promise made on condition of the execution of this locative command. Isaac will receive the promises, *if* he obeys—and the content of his obedience is, to sojourn.

Sojourn for Isaac, then, is not simply a given reality that expresses the fact of his foreign origins relative to the territory promised. It is, rather, a behavioral mandate. The charge parallels in form Abraham's mandate to leave his land of origin and travel to a divinely-revealed land, and Jacob's mandate to leave his place of safety and return to the promised land which is fraught with danger, but designated by God as the arena of his future. Like these commands, the command to Isaac stands in relation to the narrative as a programmatic directive shaping the story of the patriarch's life. God asks of each patriarch one geographical move (sometimes more), and God's promises of broad ethnic success rest on the willingness of the patriarch to make the territorial commitment that God asks of him.

In Smith's terms, then, we see here a strong elevation of a territorial dimension. The ethnic myth of election, the divine choice of an *ethnie* to receive special status and benefits (here expressed in the promises), relies on the realization of a certain territorial agenda (here expressed in the locative commands). Broadly speaking, the locative commands and their accompanying conditional promises communicate a moral vision, expressing what is required of the *ethnie*. It is common, in Smith's analysis, for ethnic election myths to include an element of required behavior:

> To be chosen in this sense is to be singled out for special purposes by, and hence to stand in a unique relation to, the divine. Persons or groups who are chosen are marked off from the multitude, often at first by a divine promise, to enable them to obey and perform God's will. They are required to stand apart, to follow a designated path, which is part of that promise. . . By doing so, they become God's elect, saved and privileged through their obedience to His will and their identification with His plan.[96]

Smith sees myths of chosenness as legitimating the community's 'title-deeds' or land charter; the reward for fulfillment of cultural or religious duties is communal possession and enjoyment of a sacred land.[97] Thus land is "conferred by the deity on a sanctified people as a reward for correct belief and conduct in the execution of their shared mission."[98] The logic resembles that of Deuteronomic land theology, in which

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[96] Smith, *Chosen*, 48-49.
[97] Smith, "Politics," 712-13.
[98] Smith, *Myths*, 269-70.

the gift of the land is granted on condition of the people's obedience to divine law. In our text here, however, it is not general fulfillment of the law upon which the divine gift rests. The promises are made, rather, on condition that Isaac *sojourns*—that he live in a particular relationship to the land that is promised. The ethnoscape, then, is divinely granted on the condition of sojourn within it.

What does it mean for Isaac's sojourn in Gerar to be placed in the category of an ethical requirement? First, it means that sojourn in some way describes a mode of conduct, or the shape of life, that is divinely required of the patriarch. The idea of sojourn may thus yield ethical possibilities, and not only territorial symbolism. Second, the designation of sojourn as God's charge to Isaac raises the question of whether the text poses this charge to Isaac's "descendants" as well. Smith notes that ethnic myths present the ancestors of the *ethnie* as models for emulation, "exemplars of virtue."[99] What then is the ethical content, the "virtue," of Isaac's duty to sojourn, and how might this requirement be meaningful for those looking to Isaac as a model? The narrative that follows the promise speech tells the story of Isaac's sojourn in Gerar, providing more information about the meaning of Isaac's sojourn in 26:3. We may begin to answer the question, then, by investigating the language of the promise speech in relation to the narrative episode it introduces.

C. Isaac's Sojourn in Gerar

Opinions differ widely as to the structure of ch. 26. The wife-sister portion of the chapter has received much attention as a test case for source criticism, with a variety of judgments resulting as to the dating and scope of the episode in relation to chs. 12 and 20, as well as to the remainder of the narrative in ch. 26.[100] Ch. 26 as a whole is most often viewed as a collection of traditions, with diverse estimations of the extent to which thematic unity has been effected in the final form of the text.[101]

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[99] Ibid., 82-83; Smith, *Chosen*, 40-41.

[100] The three tales have traditionally been viewed as literary variants, with opinions varying on whether ch. 26 is the earliest of the three (Gunkel, Koch, Skinner, Van Seters, Westermann) or the latest (Noth, Maly, von Rad). More recently, scholars have emphasized the differences in thematic focus between the tales and suggested that they may be contemporaneous (Alexander, Niditch, Petersen, Thompson). References for this discussion are extensive, but for reviews of the main contributors to the debate, see T. Desmond Alexander, "Are the Wife/Sister Incidents of Genesis Literary Compositional Variants?," *VT* 42, no. 2 (1992): 145-53; Harry S. Pappas, "Deception as Patriarchal Self-Defense in a Foreign Land: A Form Critical Study of the Wife-Sister Stories in Genesis," *GOTR* 29 (1984): 35-50; Van Seters, *Abraham*, 167-83.

[101] E.g., Delitzsch, H. Gunkel, and K. Koch describe the chapter as a "mosaic." Brueggemann writes, "This chapter is made up of an odd assortment of materials. Whatever unity it has appears to be

Among scholars who observe a unifying theme to the chapter, the proposed topics include blessing,[102] the promise,[103] and patriarchal success in a foreign context.[104]

While all three of the proposed themes above are clearly important in ch. 26, the theme of promise is structurally dominant. In comparison with the other two wife-sister tales, this is the only tale that includes a promise. The promise is situated at the beginning of the story, signaling the theme that the rest of the narrative will develop.[105] The narrative as a whole is bracketed by the divine promise, with a second theophany situated near its conclusion (26:24-25) playing again on the chords that sound at the beginning of the episode. The initial promise speech in vv. 2-5 explicitly sets up the elements around which the plot will revolve. These elements are first, the command to Isaac to sojourn, and second, the three promises made to Isaac as reward (divine accompaniment, blessing, and the gift of the land).[106] The opening verses of the chapter present these four elements proleptically, then the rest of the chapter narrates their actualization. The promise speech records the four elements in the form of command and future reward, while the narrative following records the four elements in the form of reported events. The structure turns on v. 6, which records Isaac's obedience and execution of the divine command. [107]

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secondary." Von Rad observes, "The chapter contains no less than seven traditional units… On the other hand, one can easily see that an attempt was made subsequently to weld these brief traditional units more or less into a compact continued event." Westermann counters, "Ch. 26 is a self-contained piece constructed according to a definite literary plan and clearly recognizable as such, its purpose being to gather together the few Isaac traditions that have been preserved. It is a synthesis of a variety of traditions, but not a 'mosaic'…" Delitzsch, *Neuer*, 360 (ET, 137); Gunkel, *Genesis*, 299 (ET, 293); Klaus Koch, *Was ist Formgeschichte? Methoden der Bibelexegese*, 5th ed. (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1989), 161 (ET Klaus Koch, *The Growth of the Biblical Tradition: The Form-Critical Method*, trans. S.M. Cupitt [London: Adam & Charles Black, 1969], 131); Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 221; von Rad, *Genesis*, 235 (ET, 265); Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 515 (ET, 423).

[102] Erhard Blum, *Die Komposition der Vätergeschichte*, WMANT 57 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1984), 299, 303; Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 221-22, 225-26; Coats, "Threat," 77, 80; Coats, *Genesis*, 190-91; Fokkelman, 114; Turner, 113-14.

[103] Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 188; Pappas: 47-48.

[104] David L. Petersen, "A Thrice-Told Tale: Genre, Theme, and Motif," *BR* 18 (1973): 42; Blum, 303.

[105] Here I disagree with Van Seters, who views the theophany as an interruption of the narrative structure, with "no role whatever in the rest of the story." He maintains that the theophany's only function is to extend the promises of the Abraham stories to Isaac, thus relating to the larger narrative but not the story development of ch. 26. Coats also finds the promise element in 26:2-5 disruptive, exploding the simplicity of the tale and making its structure amorphous. I will argue that the promise speech is in fact the central organizing element of the narrative in ch. 26. Van Seters, *Abraham*, 182; Coats, "Threat," 79.

[106] The subsequent promises in vv. 3-5 are given to Isaac's offspring, and thus are not immediately relevant for the plot of ch. 26, which does not involve Isaac's offspring.

[107] I disagree here with R. Polzin, who sees the key to Isaac's reward in the removal of the possibility for adultery resulting from the wife-sister ruse. Hamilton, on the other hand, believes the patriarch was *disobedient* in this deception and that God blesses him *despite* his bad behavior. Albertz, H.S. Pappas,

Immediately after Isaac receives the command to sojourn in Gerar, the narrative reports the follow-up: Isaac dwells in Gerar. Then the unfolding of the promises begins, with suspense and tension surrounding the realization of each element. Each of the three promised rewards is touched upon twice by the narrative, with the second of the two occurrences being in the form of third-person speech witnessing to the fact. Sojourn is commanded in v. 2 and fulfilled in v. 6; divine accompaniment is promised in v. 3 and realized in vv. 24 and 28; blessing is promised in v. 3 and actualized in vv. 12 and 29; the land is promised in v. 3 and features prominently in vv. 12 and 22. The structure may be mapped thus:

2-3	Sojourn in this land,	
	and I will be *with you*,	וְאֶהְיֶה עִמְּךָ
	and I will *bless* you,	וַאֲבָרְכֶךָ
	for to you and to your offspring I will give all these *lands*.	כָּל־הָאֲרָצֹת הָאֵל
6	So Isaac dwelled in Gerar.	
12	Isaac sowed *in that land* and reaped in that year one hundredfold.	בָּאָרֶץ הַהִוא
12	Yahweh *blessed* him.	וַיְבָרֲכֵהוּ יְהוָה
22	Yahweh has made room for us and we have been fruitful *in the land*.	וּפָרִינוּ בָאָרֶץ
24	I am *with you*.	אִתְּךָ אָנֹכִי
28	We see plainly that Yahweh has been *with you*.[108]	הָיָה יְהוָה עִמָּךְ
29	You are now the *blessed* one of Yahweh.	אַתָּה עַתָּה בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה

The promise speech at the start of the Isaac narrative thus functions as an "announcement of plot," a phrase used by Turner to describe "statements which either explicitly state what will happen, or which suggest to the reader what the major elements of the plot are likely to be."[109] Turner differentiates passages which merely "drop clues concerning plot development" from statements of explicitly programmatic purpose. The latter are placed right at the beginning of narrative cycles.[110] Turner distinguishes four such announcements, situated at the start of the primeval history and each of the narrative cycles for Abraham, Jacob, and Jacob's

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D.L. Petersen, and Turner do connect the fulfillment of the promises with Isaac's obedience in dwelling in Gerar, although not with the same detailed structure I propose below. Robert Polzin, "'The Ancestress of Israel in Danger' in Danger," *Semeia* 3 (1975): 81-98; Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 200; Turner, 110-11, 113; Pappas: 47-48; Albertz, *Exilszeit*, 202 (ET, 261-62); Petersen: 42-43.

[108] The narrative uses a number of prepositions to describe God's presence with the patriarchs: עִם, 28:15; 31:3; 46:4; 48:21; אֵת, 26:24; 39:2, 3, 21, 23; עִמָּד, 28:20; 31:5; 35:3; לְ, 31:42.

[109] Laurence A. Turner, *Announcements of Plot in Genesis*, JSOTSup 96 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 13.

[110] Ibid., 14.

family.[111] Turner does not include the Isaac story in his analysis, but the promise to Isaac in 26:2-5 functions in the same way as the announcements he does treat, albeit on a smaller scale. The Isaac narrative itself is very short, with ch. 26 depicting in miniature view what occurs on a broader canvas in the other cycles. Though condensed, the structure still mimics the structure of the other larger cycles, with the promise at its start serving as the interpretive key to the narrative that follows, as can be seen in the structure above.

Turner's analysis of programmatic statements highlights the question not just of promise, but also of promise fulfillment. Turner observes that announcements of plot arouse expectations for the reader, and the subsequent fulfillment or non-fulfillment of these expectations allows for possibilities of surprise, mystery, and complication.[112] On a larger scale, Clines traces the theme of fulfillment/non-fulfillment throughout the Pentateuch, describing in broad strokes how the tension between promise and fulfillment drives the overarching narrative.[113] Several scholars have observed ways in which ch. 26 develops the theme of promise fulfillment. Some of these scholars reflect on elements of promise fulfillment only in relation to the larger Abrahamic promises, and especially the promise in 12:1-3.[114] Others note connections between the whole promise speech in vv. 2-5 at the start of the chapter, and elements of fulfillment in the narrative following.[115] I suggest that the narrative

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[111] Ibid., 13. Wenham highlights the same texts as "prefaces" to the family histories, where words of divine revelation present the themes that will unfold in the major cycles of Genesis. In the case of ch. 26 he notes that the promises at the start of the narrative "secretly determine the relationship between Isaac and Abimelek, so they are set out right at the beginning." He does not, however, explore the structure of promise fulfillment in detail. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 169, 188.

[112] Turner, *Announcements*, 14-15.

[113] Clines.

[114] The contemporary label "ancestress in danger" for the wife-sister tales reveals the tendency to interpret the tales, including the narrative in ch. 26, in light of the promise of progeny. Clines is a representative example of this interpretation. Coats and Biddle, however, see the wife-sister stories as relating primarily to the promise of blessing to the nations in 12:1-3. Polzin focuses on the promise element of blessing in these stories, as embodied in wealth and progeny. Van Seters claims, "The promises to Abraham were regarded as having their first basic fulfillment in the Isaac story." Turner, by contrast, reflects on the non-fulfillment in ch. 26 of the promises of progeny and blessing to the nations. All these interpretations connect the narratives principally to the Abrahamic promises. Ibid., 45; Coats, "Threat," 71-81; Biddle: 599-611; Polzin: 88; Van Seters, *Abraham*, 188; Turner, *Genesis*, 113-15.

[115] E. Blum, Fretheim, and Westermann note that the first and last sentences of vv. 28 and 29 respectively, "Yahweh is with you—you are blessed of Yahweh" correspond to the promise in v. 3, "I will be with you and will bless you." Brueggemann hints at a theme of promise fulfillment, "In a quite understated way, this narrative uses the formula of promise (vv. 3-4, 24) to announce the goodness of a blessed world." Turner highlights the narrative fulfillment of God's promise to bless Isaac. Albertz touches briefly on the fulfillment of the three specific promises to Isaac. Gunkel makes the strongest

reflects explicitly on the fulfillment of the promises made to *Isaac* in 26:2-3 (although some connections with larger themes of the overall Genesis narrative may be traced as well). Furthermore, the fulfillment of these particular promises is integrally linked to sojourn, a thematic connection relatively unexplored by textual exegesis to date.

Are the promises in 26:2-3 wholly fulfilled in the narrative, or is there tension around the question of fulfillment? A brief investigation of each of the three promises in terms of their narrative fulfillment offers clues that help decipher the meaning of the sojourn command.

1) *Divine accompaniment.* God's first promise to Isaac is that the divine presence will accompany him. Scholars interpret the promise of divine accompaniment as a pledge of protection and/or a guarantee of success on a divinely approved mission.[116] It is closely associated with the locative commands, often appearing in association with the motif of journey.[117] It appears for the first time in Genesis here, in 26:3. The promise is well suited to accompany the command to sojourn, for it pledges an amelioration of the dangers inherent in life as an alien, offering protection by an authority higher than the local sovereign to whose power the sojourner will be vulnerable.

Is the promise of God's accompaniment fulfilled? There is no direct comment from the narrator on the events as proof of divine assistance. What is reported in the text is an affirmation from God that he *is* with Isaac (v. 24), in contrast with the earlier promise that he *will be* with him, and also the words of Abimelech and his cohorts strongly affirming that God has been with Isaac.[118] How are these men so certain? It seems that the facts of Isaac's success recorded in the narrative, even without an explicit textual reference to divine accompaniment, are the evidence that convinces Abimelech and his men that God is with Isaac.[119] Since protection offered

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claim for the promise and its fulfillment as structuring the narrative, reasoning that these elements were added at a later stage to bring unity to a "motley" array of parts. In Gunkel's opinion the resulting unity is thin and the passage remains uncohesive; he does not, however, offer a detailed textual examination of the elements of the promise and its fulfillment. Blum, 303; Fretheim, 530; Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 522 (ET, 428); Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 226; Turner, *Genesis*, 113; Albertz, *Exilszeit*, 202 (ET, 261-62); Gunkel, *Genesis*, 299-300 (ET, 293-94).

[116] E.g., Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 92, 189; Fokkelman, 114; Van Seters, *Prologue*, 304.

[117] Westermann, *Verheißungen*, 131 (ET, 141).

[118] The text contains an emphatic infinitive absolute, רָאוֹ רָאִינוּ.

[119] C.W. Mitchell writes, "Abimelek recognizes the favorable relationship between Isaac and Yahweh. Yahweh is with him…meaning that God has made known his favorable attitude toward him by

for a journey would relate especially to interactions with foreigners encountered in the strange land, it is specifically in the exchanges with the inhabitants of Gerar that divine assistance would be most apparent. In this relational realm we see Isaac repeatedly gaining the upper hand: the people are commanded not to touch him under penalty of death (v. 11); he becomes so wealthy that the Philistines envy him (v. 14); he is asked to leave because he is too powerful for them (v. 16); he attains his goal of access to water after several squabbles over wells (vv. 22, 32); and Abimelech comes to him requesting a covenant of nonaggression (vv. 28-29). After the description of these facts, the verbal affirmations from God and Abimelech that Isaac is divinely assisted appear as summations concluding a long series of narrative proofs. God promised Isaac divine assistance during his sojourn in a foreign land, and from the evidence the narrative offers, God fulfilled that promise.

2) *Blessing*. Blessing by its simplest definition is the bestowal of a benefit as a visible sign of favor.[120] In the patriarchal narratives, the benefits of blessing relate to "health and wealth."[121] Blessing is embodied in the things that sustain and prolong life: fertility (of body, field, and cattle), financial prosperity, health, and general good fortune or well-being.[122] Blessing thus relates to generativity and productivity, natural processes that belong in the orbit of creation theology.[123] It finds its measure in material, this-worldly success.[124]

The narrative expressly links God's blessing of Isaac (26:12) with an increase in his wealth. The phrasing is exaggerated, with three forms of the root √גדל. "become great," in one verse (26:13) and the modifier מְאֹד, "exceeding," added as a finale. As in 24:35, the report of God's blessing is supported by an inventory of

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conferring various benefits upon him…" Christopher Wright Mitchell, *The Meaning of BRK "To Bless" in the Old Testament*, SBLDS 95 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1987), 69.

[120] Ibid., 165-66. Mitchell sketches the history of the scholarly interpretation of blessing in ch. 2 of this work.

[121] Amos, 10.

[122] Walter Brueggemann, *Reverberations of Faith: A Theological Handbook of Old Testament Themes* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2002), 19; Josef Scharbert, "ברך," in *ThWAT*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1973), 825-27 (ET Josef Scharbert, "ברך," in *TDOT*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1975], 293-95); Claus Westermann, *Der Segen in der Bibel und im Handeln der Kirche* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1968), 14, 25 (ET Claus Westermann, *Blessing in the Bible and the Life of the Church*, trans. Keith Crim, OBT [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978], 6, 18); Westermann, *Verheißungen*, 126, 145 (ET, 136, 157); Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 172 (ET, 149); Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 275.

[123] Amos, 12; Fretheim, 425; Brueggemann, *Reverberations*, 19; Westermann, *Segen*, 44-45 (ET, 41); Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 275.

[124] A. Murtonen, "The Use and Meaning of the Words l^{e}bårek and b^{e}råkå^h in the Old Testament," *VT* 9, no. 2 (1959): 165, 175.

wealth (26:14). Commentators have pointed out the narrative emphasis on Isaac's wealth as effected by divine agency.[125] This occurs not only by the connection with blessing in v. 12, but also by the shape of the plot in the wife-sister episode as compared with those in chs. 12 and 20. While the patriarch in the other stories receives his wealth as a gift from the local sovereign (albeit with different timing and motivation each time), here Isaac's prosperity is unrelated to the benevolence of Abimelech. Divine agency in the wife-sister story has an entirely different shape here: God appears at the start and promises blessing, then God enters again at the conclusion and delivers this blessing, in the shape of material gain. The promise of blessing, in Van Seters's words, is "made good."[126]

The sense of divine intervention in granting material blessing is heightened by the introit to the episode, which situates the events during a time of famine. Isaac's rich harvest stands in striking contrast to this famine.[127] The finding of wells near the end of the narrative draws an arc of development from famine to water, paralleling the arc of the Abraham story from barrenness to birth.[128] The story forms a "narrative of prosperity"[129] that accentuates God's blessing on Isaac and confirms the fulfillment of the promise.

The promise receives another narrative accent on its fulfillment in the pronouncement of blessing on Isaac in 26:29. Abimelech and his entourage tell Isaac that he is blessed by God. Is the speech here a simple acknowledgment of fact, parallel to the admissions of Laban (24:31 and 30:30); Abraham's servant (24:35); and even the narrator (24:1; 25:11; 26:12; 39:5)?[130] Or is it an active invocation of blessing, parallel to that of Melchizedek in 14:19-20?[131] Furthermore, is Abimelech here taking steps to appropriate for himself the blessing of Isaac, thus fulfilling the "extension"[132] of the blessing promise, that the nations will also be blessed through

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[125] Coats, *Genesis*, 190-91; Petersen: 42-43; Van Seters, *Abraham*, 188.

[126] Van Seters, *Abraham*, 188.

[127] See von Rad, *Genesis*, 236 (ET, 266).

[128] Turner, *Genesis*, 110; Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 225-26.

[129] Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 223.

[130] Most of these statements are descriptions based upon concrete indications of material wealth.

[131] Vawter's translation suggests this: "Henceforth, 'The LORD's blessing be upon you!'" Vawter, 295. Speiser believes the phrase is not an invocation but a form of welcome. Speiser, *Genesis*, 202 n. 29. According to Mitchell an invocation of blessing is no different than a declaration, as it simply describes the relationship between God and the person who is blessed. "The blessings declare that, because of the favorable relationship, the person blessed has been, or will be, the recipient of benefits bestowed by God." Mitchell, 79.

[132] Westermann, *Verheißungen*, 145-46 (ET, 157-58).

proper relationship to the patriarch?[133] Whatever the interpretation, the speakers articulate clearly the fulfillment of the blessing promise recorded in 26:3. "The Philistines appear as another device for articulation of the blessing."[134] The narrative confirms that God has unmistakably granted Isaac what he was promised.

3) *Land*. Does Isaac experience fulfillment of the land promise? Isaac alone among the patriarchs is recorded to have sown seed in the land and reaped a harvest (26:12). Delitzsch writes, "We see from this union of agricultural with nomadic life…not as yet found in the history of Abraham, that Isaac, encouraged by the Divine promise, had set firm foot in the land."[135] Certainly Isaac's farming activity indicates closer access to the land, and the extravagance of the earth's yield accents success in his relationship to the land. Few critics interpret this text, however, as indicating actual possession of any territory.[136] It is possible to say that Isaac experienced blessing in his relationship to the land, but not to say for certain that he possessed it. The promise is thus unfulfilled, but there is also a hint of the experience of what fulfillment might look like.

The statement that Yahweh made room for Isaac to be fruitful in the land expresses similar ambiguity. The words do convey a sense of freedom and stability in relation to the land, along with the expectation of fertility. The latter, however, is only a future hope, and not a certain fulfillment. The former is even more problematic. Isaac does indeed have room at Rehoboth, but it is in the context of two conflicts: his increased prosperity has led to his eviction from the city of Gerar (vv. 14, 16), and conflicts with the shepherds of Gerar have forced him to move twice until he finally finds a well that is uncontested (vv. 17-11). His "ample room"[137] here is set against the backdrop of *no* room, in either the city or the valley of Gerar.[138] Once again there is a hint of fulfillment, but not a full-fledged realization.

The wells themselves may suggest the staking of some claim in the land. Van Seters suggests this but acknowledges that these claims were not pressed, as Isaac

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[133] Biddle: 610-11; Fretheim, 527; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 193; Van Seters, *Abraham*, 187.

[134] Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 222.

[135] Delitzsch, *Neuer*, 362 (ET, 141).

[136] Vawter and Van Seters claim that Isaac's planting means he actually owned land. Von Rad suggests that some limited planting is consonant with semi-nomadic practices of grazing flocks on fields belonging to farmers. Skinner and Davidson also believe this is possible. Vawter, 294; Van Seters, *Abraham*, 188-89; von Rad, *Genesis*, 143, 235 (ET, 166, 265); Skinner, 365; Davidson, 129.

[137] Davidson, 130.

[138] Turner rightly notes that 'Reheboth' (Room) does not connote peace or harmony, but simply the space to exist separately. Turner, *Genesis*, 114.

withdrew to Rehoboth.[139] Wenham casts the discovery of water supply as a pledge of *future* security in the land, so that the most Isaac experiences is the "incipient" fulfillment of the divine promises.[140] Isaac's building of an altar at Beer-sheba (v. 25) is similarly indefinite. The episode parallels the theophany and subsequent actions of Abraham in 12:7-8, where land possession was even less of a reality. The act seems more closely related to the theophany and divine promise that prompts it, than to concrete actions of territorial acquisition. If Isaac was staking a claim to the land by building an altar,[141] the claim was at most symbolic. Again, the act may point to a future realization, but is not clear evidence of fulfillment in Isaac's time.

Thus Isaac may be successful, fruitful, and powerful in relation to the people of Gerar, but he does not gain a foothold in their territory. He is divinely blessed and protected, but he owns no land. Isaac begins as a sojourner in Gerar and never changes his status, although he is a sojourner who experiences obvious and even extravagant blessing and protection.

The structure of the narrative is clear. Isaac receives the command of God to sojourn. The command is a condition for three promises which will be fulfilled for him if he obeys. Isaac does obey, and the subsequent narrative is careful to address the ensuing fulfillment of the three promises. Two of the three promises are clearly fulfilled. The third promise, however, is only hinted at. Its fulfillment is hopeful, incipient, perhaps symbolically achieved—but it is not fully realized. This promise which hangs between fulfillment and non-fulfillment is, not surprisingly, the promise of the land.

We return to the question of the sojourn command and its ethical content. Sojourn in its ordinary definition means life in a land not possessed, presence without belonging. As Smith points out, unsettledness and uprootedness ordinarily militate against a strong ethnic identity.[142] In the framework of divine command and promise, however, sojourn takes on an additional dimension. Sojourn means presence in a land not possessed, but promised as a future possession. As explored in the discussion of ch. 17, the framework of an election myth makes outside origins an asset to ethnic identity. Here we see an additional element introduced: a portrait of what life looks like for the *ethnie* defining itself by sojourn. Isaac, a father of the

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[139] Van Seters, *Abraham*, 190.
[140] Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 194.
[141] Vawter, 296; Albertz, *Exilszeit*, 202-03 (ET, 262); Pagolu, 70.
[142] Smith, *Chosen*, 39.

ethnie, is commanded to sojourn. His life as a sojourner brings him the benefits of divine election—blessing and protection galore—but the promise of land remains unfulfilled. He is to live in expectation, waiting on the fulfillment of the promise. His life as a sojourner is a life of obedience to the divine command, and is thus rewarded with signs of promise fulfillment. With regard to the land promise, however, the signs are only symbols of a future that lies ahead. Isaac's life of sojourn means that he does not possess the land, but his alienation from the land is ameliorated by the future possession that is divinely promised, and that transforms his present sojourn with symbolic embodiments of future belonging. The theme of sojourn as a herald of promise fulfillment, lightly touched on in the story of Isaac's birth in ch. 21, is here expanded and made explicit.

Set in the framework of Israel's election myth, sojourn here strengthens ethnic identity by emphasizing ethnic chosenness for a positive future. It also provides a moral vision for the life of the *ethnie* in the present. The people of Israel are, like Isaac, to understand their attachment to the land as secondary to their religious commitment; that is, derived from it and dependent upon it. Ethnic territory that is divinely granted means a stronger tie to the land, but also a more flexible one. Loss of sovereignty in the land or exile from it are not existential threats to the ethnic identity of Israel, for the category of sojourn as a command of God gives the *ethnie* resources for survival in an interim where possession is not actual, but hoped for. This text shows that not only land possession but also sojourn are part of the divine plan for Israel, and sketches the shape a life of sojourn might take. Sojourn ethics will be further elaborated in Chapter Four, but the suggestion of sojourn as a mandate begins here. This text also helps to provide the logic underlying sojourn as a metaphor for all of life, an idea which recurs in both the Jewish and Christian canon, often coupled with an accompanying reference to the past sojourn of the ancestors.

Genesis 28:4

The fourth and final promise speech containing a reference to sojourn occurs in 28:1-4, when Isaac commissions Jacob to go to Paddan-aram, following Jacob's obtaining of Esau's blessing by deceit in ch. 27. The speech is not a divine promise; it issues from the lips of Isaac, and is presented in the form of a wish for the promises

of God to apply to Jacob.[143] The language of the speech, however, closely mirrors the language of the promise speeches,[144] and the logic of the speech follows a similar structure. Comparison with the other promise speeches to the patriarchs is thus the most illuminating context for the study of this text. Like the promise speech in ch. 26, the speech here is integrally connected with its narrative setting. The discussion following, therefore, will follow a sequence similar to the preceding section of this chapter, moving from analysis of the text, to its relation with its immediate context, then to its broader narrative setting.

A. Command and Blessing

The text of 28:1-4 fits into the pattern outlined previously of a locative command followed by an enumeration of divinely-bestowed benefits. The bi-partite division is as follows:

[Command]

1 *Do not take* a wife from the daughters of Canaan (לֹא־תִקַּח)

2 *Arise* and *go* to Paddan-aram, to the house of Bethuel, your mother's father (קוּם לֵךְ)

   And *take* for yourself a wife from there from the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother (וְקַח)

[Benefits]

3 And may God Almighty *bless you*, and *make you fruitful,* and *multiply* you,

(יְבָרֵךְ אֹתְךָ וְיַפְרְךָ וְיַרְבֶּךָ)

   so you will *become an assembly of peoples* (וְהָיִיתָ לִקְהַל עַמִּים)

4 And *give to you the blessing of Abraham*, to you and to your seed with you

(וְיִתֶּן־לְךָ אֶת־בִּרְכַּת אַבְרָהָם)

   so you will *possess the land of your sojourn*, which God gave to Abraham

(לְרִשְׁתְּךָ אֶת־אֶרֶץ מְגֻרֶיךָ)

Opinions are divided as to whether the speech is structured conditionally; that is, whether the benefits bestowed are presented as contingent upon the fulfillment of the commands. Coats states, somewhat enigmatically, "The blessing itself does not tie explicitly to the instructions for a proper marriage, although the juxtaposition

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[143] There is no consensus as to the precise form of this speech; e.g., Westermann describes the speech as a blessing in the form of a wish; Fokkelman calls it a wish for the promises of God; A. Pagolu calls it a prayer of blessing; Mitchell calls it a prayer for the blessing promises. Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 546 (ET, 447-48); Fokkelman, 112, 57 n. 28; Pagolu, 125-26; Mitchell, 98-100.

[144] In particular, see the close parallels D.M. Carr traces between 17:8 and 28:4, both divine speeches attributed to the Priestly source. Carr, 81.

suggests that finding a proper wife is fundamental to fulfillment of the promise."[145] Fokkelman believes the fulfillment of the charge "will lead to" the realization of the blessing,[146] and translates the text "take a cognate wife from there, *so that* God *may* give you the blessing of Abraham."[147] Westermann favors a strong connection, arguing that the command governs the text, and that the link between the command and the blessing is determinative, as it is elsewhere in P.[148] Both Westermann and Wenham call attention to the narrative following, where Esau responds to the incident by marrying a wife he hopes will not bring displeasure to his parents. The episode mimics the logic of the promise speech, with Esau attempting to act in a way parallel to the instructions given to Jacob in hope of attaining the benefits of parental goodwill, and thus suggests that there is a causal connection between Jacob's commission to find a wife in Paddan-aram and his reception of the blessing.[149]

The structure of this speech follows the pattern observed in the previous discussion of 26:3. As in the locative commands of the promise speeches, the logic of command and benefit forges a conditional association between two components in the text. These two significant elements are introduced for the first time in the narrative, both presented in the weighty context of the last words of Isaac recorded in Genesis. The first element is the command to marry a particular sort of wife. The second element is the explicit designation of Jacob as the heir to the Abrahamic promises.[150] The second element is connected to the first; obedience is the condition for the promise. While the structure is familiar, the content is new. What is the meaning of the connection suggested here between the promises and marriage?

We may make the initial observation that the commands to Jacob and their associated benefits are thematically linked. A. Frisch notes a linguistic symmetry connecting the command, "take" (לקח√), and the resulting promise, "give" (נתן√).[151] In addition, Turner notes, "These elements of the Abrahamic promises are particularly appropriate in this context as Jacob leaves the *land* to find a *wife*."[152]

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[145] Coats, *Genesis*, 200.

[146] Fokkelman, 112.

[147] Ibid., 112 n. 38.

[148] Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 544 (ET, 446).

[149] Ibid; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 214.

[150] See discussion below for the variety of scholarly opinions on whether this designation of Jacob as heir to the promises is first introduced here, earlier in ch. 27, or later in 28:13-15.

[151] Amos Frisch, "'Your Brother Came with Guile': Responses to an Explicit Moral Evaluation in Biblical Narrative," *Prooftexts* 23, no. 3 (2003): 281.

[152] Turner, *Genesis*, 125.

Isaac commands Jacob to leave Canaan, and the promise of v. 4 is that he will possess (√ירשׁ) that same land. Isaac instructs Jacob to marry, and the promises of v. 3 all relate to the quantity of his progeny (God will make Jacob fruitful, numerous, and an assembly of peoples). The latter command and benefit are related by a fairly straightforward connection.[153] The former, however, present an irony. Jacob is to leave the land of Canaan, both geographically in his actual journey to Paddan-aram, and symbolically in his choice not to unite with its people; that is, not to marry "the daughters of Canaan." Associated with this departure and disengagement, however, is the promise that he will possess this very same land. As Amos observes, "…it is remarkable how the promise of the land is made to Jacob just as he is forced to leave it."[154] The logic seems counter-intuitive.

Here we find the term "sojourn" serving as an interpretive key. Isaac uses the term to describe the land that Jacob will possess, in the now-familiar juxtaposition of present alienation and future possession:[155] "so you will possess the land of your sojourn" (see the previous discussion of 17:8).[156] If Jacob is to one day belong in this presently-strange land, he is called upon to disengage from the land in his choice of wife. Not marrying a daughter of the land is connected to his status of present alienation from, and future belonging in, this land. Jacob's alienation from the land, his sojourn, is to be mirrored by his choice of wife: the choice demands first, that Jacob journey away from the land, and second, that he marry a woman "from the daughters of Laban," not "from the daughters of Canaan."

Why, however, is further alienation the path to a future eradication of alienation? The first possibility is that the promise here follows the same logic as the promise to Isaac in 26:3. There Isaac's future possession of the land depended upon his present obedience to God's command of sojourn. A life of non-possession in the present signaled an identity rooted primarily in God's election, and dependent upon divine grant of the land rather than concrete possession of it. Here too we may see this logic at work. Jacob's commission to distance himself from the land in his

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[153] A similar connection can be seen in the blessing of Rebekah in 24:60, where the occasion of a marriage is an appropriate setting of a wish for abundant progeny.

[154] Amos, 179.

[155] Fokkelman highlights this juxtaposition in the textual contrast between the wished-for יִתֶּן "that he may give" and the thankful נָתַן "he has given," both in v. 4. Fokkelman, 112.

[156] 17:8 also used the phrase "land of sojourn," אֶרֶץ מְגֻרֶיךָ. Von Rad proposes that the phrase is coined by P as a theological term expressing a particular relationship to the land. See von Rad, *Genesis*, 169-70, 214 (ET, 195, 245); von Rad, *Theologie*, 172-73 (ET, 169).

choice of wife signals that his attachment to the land is not "natural." The prior promises focused on outside origins to highlight the divine appointment of the land as the ethnoscape for Israel, eschewing an autochthonous conception of Israel's connection to the land in favor of a concept of ethnic election that served a stronger ethnic identity. Here, it is not autochthony that is the logical opposite of sojourn, but belonging to the land through marriage, through union with "its" daughters. The insistence on Jacob's distance from Canaanite women is a symbolic imaging of his sojourn, pointing away from the present alienation toward a future possession of the land that is given, emphatically, by God alone. A non-Canaanite marriage, then, reinforces the divine appointment of Canaan as ethnoscape for Israel.

This first suggestion gives a general framework for the interpretation of this text. There is some specific content to the text, however, that demands further probing. Jacob is specifically commanded to go to Paddan-aram and marry one of his maternal cousins.[157] This instruction goes beyond the logic sketched above and challenges it. Had Isaac simply commanded Jacob to choose a wife from outside Canaan, his instruction may have been interpreted as a straightforward emphasis on "outside origins." This idea harmonizes well with an ideology of continued sojourn in the land divinely appointed as Israel's ethnoscape. Further exploration is required, however, to account for the specificity of the command in Isaac's speech. Here the narrative setting of the promise speech proves helpful in the interpretation of the text.

B. The Priestly Account of Jacob's Departure from Canaan

The promise speech in 28:1-4 is a part of a narrative episode stretching at the minimum from 27:46 through 28:9. This passage is traditionally assigned to the Priestly narrative,[158] in large part because of its vocabulary.[159] The interpretation of

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[157] Jacob executes the command in its specificity, except that he marries *two* women who answer the requirements. Leah is at first introduced as a retardation in the plot, which presses toward Jacob's marriage to Rachel, the chosen wife. Rachel continues to occupy a favored position with Jacob throughout her life. Leah and her progeny, however, are not excluded from the ethnic election myth as Hagar, Ishmael, and Esau are. In fact, Jacob's dual marriage represents the transition from linear to segmented genealogy, when, for the first time, there is no dis-elect sibling excluded from the promises. The double marriage of Jacob to two sisters may play a part in this sense of completeness, as siblings/twins in myth often symbolize synthesis between opposite parts of a whole. See J.E. Circlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, trans. Jack Sage (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), 23-25, 336-37.

[158] See Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 236-37; Gunkel, *Genesis*, 385 (ET, 372); Davidson, 143; Driver, *Genesis*, 263; von Rad, *Genesis*, 245 (ET, 277); Scullion, 208; Van Seters, *Abraham*, 283; Speiser, *Genesis*, 216; Vawter, 308.

this passage as a didactic text urging endogamous marriage also fits well with exilic or post-exilic concerns about intermarriage associated with the Priestly writer.[160] In addition, issues of style and narrative development contribute to the designation of this passage as Priestly, primarily in contradistinction with the J narrative of ch. 27. The relationship with the blessing narrative in ch. 27 is uneasy: the P account seems to follow a separate chronology, it presents an alternate motivation for Jacob's departure from Canaan, and the blessing it records raises questions about the nature of Isaac's prior blessing of Jacob.[161]

The difficulties in harmonizing ch. 28 with ch. 27 have led many scholars to pursue an interpretation of ch. 28 emphasizing its independence from the narrative development in ch. 27. The P account is isolated in the text of 27:41-28:9 (with an introductory text, also isolated from its context, situated earlier in 26:34-35[162]). Several sharp contrasts are then drawn with the J narrative of 27:1-45: the P account criticizes Esau, even laying the blame for the family conflict at the feet of Esau and his exogamous marriages rather than Jacob and his deception;[163] Jacob is portrayed as the obedient son executing Isaac's instructions rather than an unscrupulous trickster who dupes both his father and brother;[164] the rivalry between Jacob and Esau is mitigated;[165] and Jacob receives the blessing(s) because he has not married exogamously as Esau has.[166]

More recently, interpreters have argued for the unity of the account from 26:34 through 28:9. The motivation for Jacob's journey in ch. 28 can be reconciled with the rationale in ch. 27, and indeed the narrative itself seems to attempt this harmonization with the transition in 27:41-45, presenting the first motivation (Esau's

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[159] Vocabulary and phrasing typical of P (and especially in ch. 17) include the divine name El Shaddai (v. 3), the verb combination "make fruitful" (√פרה) and "multiply" (√רבה) (v. 3), "assembly of peoples" (v. 3), "your seed with you" (v. 4), and "land of your sojourn" (v. 4).

[160] Amos, 179-80; Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 236-38, 240; von Rad, *Genesis*, 245 (ET, 277); Scullion, 208; Speiser, *Genesis*, 216; Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 547 (ET, 448).

[161] For an explanation of the calculations which reveal the contradictions in chronology between the J and P accounts, see Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 233; Driver, *Genesis*, 262.

[162] Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 236-37; Carr, 85-86; Coats, *Genesis*, 199; Davidson, 142; Driver, *Genesis*, 254, 262-63; Gunkel, *Genesis*, 385 (ET, 372); von Rad, *Genesis*, 237 (ET, 268); Scullion, 202; Speiser, *Genesis*, 202, 215; Vawter, 297, 307; Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 524 (ET, 429).

[163] Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 236; Carr, 87; Coats, *Genesis*, 199-203; von Rad, *Genesis*, 245 (ET, 276).

[164] Coats, *Genesis*, 200; Carr, 87; Skinner, 374; Vawter, 297.

[165] Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 237; Terence E. Fretheim, "The Jacob Traditions: Theology and Hermeneutic," *Int* 26 (1972): 432; Vawter, 297, 307; Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 547 (ET, 448).

[166] Davidson, 133; Gunkel, *Genesis*, 386 (ET, 372); von Rad, *Genesis*, 245 (ET, 276); Skinner, 374; Speiser, *Genesis*, 202; Vawter, 307.

wrath) followed by Rebekah's construction of the second rationale (marriage choice) as an excuse with which she influences Isaac.[167] Likewise, the text of 26:34-35 need not be viewed as isolated or misplaced. Commentators have argued for its thematic continuity with the themes preceding it in ch. 26,[168] as well as for its deliberate placement at the beginning of ch. 27 in an intentional framing of the blessing account within the theme of marriage choices.[169] These interpretations allows for a more integrated reading of the narratives about Isaac's blessings which avoids their fragmentation into parallel, contradictory accounts.

An analysis that accentuates the unity of the blessing narratives is not of necessity a claim for their origin in one source, although it is possible to make a case that they come from one hand.[170] Such an analysis, rather, allows for a shift in emphasis from a contrastive framework emphasizing polarities to one in which smaller textual units can each play a nuanced role in the final form of the narrative. Regardless of this text's source, summarily assigning its thrust to an exilic/post-exilic concern for purity of lineage short-circuits the process of exploring its function within the continuing story of the patriarchs. Whether or not they represent contributions from J and from P, the two blessings in chs. 27 and 28 are a part of one larger narrative, and play interrelated roles in the development of its ongoing themes—most particularly the theme of promise, which is not the exclusive domain of either J or P alone. This assumption involves a subtle reformulation of the approach to the promise speech in 28:1-4. Instead of asking, *how is this blessing different from the one preceding it,* the question can be framed as, *what does this blessing contribute to the overall development of the promise theme in the patriarchal narratives?*

Taken as a unit that plays an important part in a connected (though variegated) narrative, this episode (27:46-28:9) contributes two elements that are significant for the development of the promise theme. First, this promise speech explicitly connects Jacob to the divine promises given to Abraham and Isaac. Opinions differ on what

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[167] Alter, *Genesis*, 147; Amos, 178-79; Michael Fishbane, "Composition and Structure in the Jacob Cycle," *JJS* 26 (1975): 25-26; Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 234.

[168] E.g., the themes of alliance with outsiders, and the motif of wells echoed in the name of Esau's father-in-law Beeri. Amos, 170; Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 210; Turner, *Genesis*, 115.

[169] Alter, *Genesis*, 136, 147; Amos, 170; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 202.

[170] Wenham, for example, makes this argument. Among other evidence he marshals is the observation that the vocabulary of 28:1-4 is reflective of the promise speeches in general rather than of P in particular. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 203-04.

exact role this speech plays in relation to those immediately preceding and following it. Some scholars point to 27:29c as echoing the promise to Abraham in 12:3, and so argue that Jacob was already designated the heir of Abraham in ch. 27.[171] In this view the connection to Abraham in 28:1-4 comes as merely an affirmation or reminder of the earlier designation, or simply as an alternate (and thus superfluous) account expressing the same idea.[172] Others argue that Isaac's speech in ch. 28 only expresses Isaac's hope that Jacob would become the heir of the Abrahamic promises, and that Jacob does not in fact become so until later, when God speaks to him directly in 28:13-15.[173] In this view also, the speech of 28:1-4 recedes in significance.

It is clear that the speech of 28:1-4 is explicitly cast in the language of the divine promises spoken to Abraham and Isaac in the narrative thus far.[174] The preceding blessing in 27:27-29 suggests this language, but only in part.[175] The Bethel promise speech of 28:13-15 utilizes the same language in the highly charged context of divine address, but in the narrative order it comes after 28:1-4, and thus only serves as a ratification, albeit a powerful one. The ratification, furthermore, serves to confirm the power of Isaac's prior words in 28:1-4, so that although they were merely human words, they are now shown to have been in content, factually correct. Jacob, then, is in 28:1-4 for the first time explicitly designated the heir to the promises of Abraham.[176]

The connection of 28:1-4 with the thread of promise speeches running through the narrative exerts a powerful effect in the development of the Jacob/Esau story. Up until now the narrative has recorded several machinations on the part of

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[171] E.g., Mitchell, 81-83.

[172] Ibid., 99-100.

[173] E.g., Fokkelman, 57 n. 28, 110-12.

[174] See the preceding discussion on the vocabulary of P for references that 28:1-4 holds in common with the promise speeches in P; in addition, see the promise speeches in 12:1-3, 7; 13:14-17; 15:5, 7, 13-16, 18-21; 22:16-18; 28:13-15; and 26:2-5, 24. See also the earlier analysis of 28:1-4 in terms of locative command and promised benefits, which aligns it with the logical structure prevailing in the promise speeches overall. Most importantly, the speech references the promises of land and descendants, two central elements which are reiterated throughout the promise speeches, but are absent from the blessing of ch. 27.

[175] 27:29c invokes a curse on those who curse Jacob and a blessing on those who bless him. This is the only explicit parallel to any of the earlier promise speeches.

[176] Some examples of scholars who arrive at a similar conclusion, albeit by a variety of arguments, are Adrien Janis Bledstein, "Binder, Trickster, Hell and Hairy-Man: Rereading Genesis 27 as a Trickster Tale Told by a Woman," in *A Feminist Companion to Genesis*, ed. Athalya Brenner, The Feminist Companion to the Bible 2 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 283-90; Calvin, 247; Coats, *Genesis*, 200; Davidson, 143; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 210, 214; Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 546 (ET, 447-48).

Jacob and Rebekah resulting in Jacob's obtaining benefits that originally belonged to Esau. The theme of the divine promises is left hanging, however, and the reader is in suspense. Will the promise continue? Which brother will receive it? Do the successful ploys of Jacob mean he is now the heir to Abraham? Only in 28:1-4 is the answer given (and perhaps just the beginning of the answer). Here for the first time in the Jacob narrative the text opens up to the wider horizons of God's election of Jacob, Jacob's succession to Isaac and Abraham as father to Israel, and the appointment of the land of Canaan as the ethnoscape for the people. The blessing in ch. 27 had its own role in the Jacob narrative, defining the future of Jacob over against that of Esau, with all the ethnic symbolism entailed regarding the interrelation of the two peoples descended from them. The speech in ch. 28, however, plays a different role, connecting Jacob for the first time to the myth of ethnic election and the divine appointment of an ethnoscape for the people of Israel.

The speech of 28:1-4 also adds another significant element to the development of the promise theme in the overall narrative. This element is the inclusion of Jacob's wife in the horizon of election and promise. Coats notes that the J account of Jacob's flight focuses on the rivalry between the brothers as its main theme, and makes the telling observation, "That Jacob eventually returns with a family is somewhat incidental."[177] In comparison, the P account contributes to the narrative a tight connection between the family structure and the patriarchal promise. Jacob's choice of wife is connected with God's election of Jacob as father to a people, and with the divine appointment of the land of Canaan as the territory for this people. The discussion of Isaac's speech above stressed this connection within the logical structure of the speech itself; here it becomes evident that the narrative setting also emphasizes the link. The speech of Isaac is situated at the beginning of Jacob's journey, framing the following chapters with the theme of intentional marriage choice under the aegis of the promise, while also maintaining and further developing the theme of sibling rivalry already introduced by the preceding chapter.[178]

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[177] Coats, *Genesis*, 205.

[178] Esau, by contrast, is shown in this narrative to be the dis-elect brother, and his marriage choice in 28:6-9 confirms his status relative to the promise. His marriage to Mahalath offers a negative corroboration of the connection between marriage and promise: she is the daughter of Ishmael, who the narrative has already shown to be the dis-elect son of the previous generation, and is thus disconnected with the promises as, by association, is his daughter. Kunin reasons that Esau's marriages make him both ideologically and genealogically distinct from Israel. Davidson notes, "From the point of view of the main religious theme of the patriarchal traditions…he is but marrying into a cul-de-sac." Davidson, 143; Kunin, 109-11.

Viewed as an isolated example of P's ideology, this text and its genealogical agenda can be relegated to the minimal position of "a minority report,"[179] presenting an alternate ideology out of tune with its narrative context. Assuming the text makes a contribution that works toward the overall goals of the narrative, however, some continuities can be discerned with the broader context of the patriarchal stories. Jacob's journey to Paddan-aram and his choice of wife are closely connected with the election myth. A similar connection was made earlier, in ch. 24, when Abraham commissioned his servant to procure a wife for Isaac. An investigation of the commonalities between these two passages—traditionally assigned to different sources, J and P—further highlights the significance of Isaac's speech and in particular, its reference to sojourn.

C. Isaac's Wife and Jacob's Wives

Our text and the text of ch. 24 are situated in parallel positions relative to the larger narrative. Each represents a transition to the next generation, following the completion of a collection of stories about the prior patriarch, in the first case Abraham (chs. 12-23) and in the second Isaac (25:19-27:46).[180] The transitional materials in each case involve, among other things, the last narrative mention of the mother (Sarah in 24:67, Rebekah in 28:7),[181] the last recorded speech of the father (Abraham in 24:6-8, Isaac in 28:1-4), the ritualized last testament of the father introduced with a notation of his advanced age (ch. 24 and ch. 27),[182] and a charge for the procurement of a suitable wife for the son (24:2-4 and 28:1-2). The motif of blessing interweaves throughout both accounts,[183] with particular attention to the transfer of blessing to the next generation (24:35-36; 28:4).

A comparison with ch. 24 reinforces the significant elements previously noted at the dual levels of the speech itself and its immediate narrative context. First,

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[179] Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 237.

[180] Brueggemann identifies transitional elements at the end of the Abraham narrative and finds parallels in the Jacob and Joseph narratives, but does not mention the texts about Isaac. Ibid., 195.

[181] Brief genealogical notes reference Sarah later in 25:12 and 49:31, and Rebekah in 29:12; 35:8; and 49:31.

[182] For the last will and testament as the socio-institutional setting of ch. 24, see Wolfgang M.W. Roth, "The Wooing of Rebekah: A Tradition-Critical Study of Genesis 24," *CBQ* 34 (1972): 177-78.

[183] In ch. 24, vv. 1, 27, 31, 35, 48, 60; in ch. 28, vv. 1, 3, 4, 6 (x2). The motif is also dominant in ch. 27, with which ch. 28 is closely linked: 27:4, 7, 10, 12, 19, 23, 25, 27 (x2), 29 (x2), 30, 31, 33 (x2), 34, 35, 38 (x2), 41 (x2).

the charge to marry endogamously is forcefully presented in both texts.[184] Both charges are paired with an emphatic prohibition against marriage to the daughters of Canaan (24:3; 28:1). In ch. 24, a solemn oath underlines the urgency of the commission (24:2, 9). While the words used for the destination are different, the implication of both is a directive to the same area (called in ch. 24 Abraham's native land, and in ch. 28 Paddan-aram), and to the same people (in ch. 24 Abraham's kin, in ch. 28 the particular family of Bethuel). The language of the two charges shares several common elements of vocabulary:

Do not take a wife (לֹא־תִקַּח אִשָּׁה)

From the daughters of Canaan (מִבְּנוֹת כְּנָעַן / מִבְּנוֹת הַכְּנַעֲנִי)

Go (לֵךְ / תֵּלֵךְ)

Take a wife (וְקַח־לְךָ ... אִשָּׁה / וְלָקַחְתָּ אִשָּׁה)

Second, both texts access the tradition of the promises in conjunction with the choice of wife. In 28:4, the Abrahamic promises of land and progeny are invoked upon Jacob when/if he carries out the marriage charge. The charge and the promise are closely connected. In 24:7, Abraham appeals to God's past command for him to leave his native country and to the divine grant of the land of Canaan[185] as assurance that God will now enable his servant to return to the land he had left and bring a wife back for his son from there. Here Abraham claims that the marriage he has in mind for Isaac will succeed, because the same God who made the past promises will guarantee its success. In other words, the project of selecting a wife from Paddan-aram is in line with the trajectory of the divine promises. Again, charge and promise are closely knit together.

Here also, in this interconnection, we see once again the theme of alienation from the land of Canaan. In both texts, the protagonists are to distance themselves from the daughters of Canaan, journeying away from the land to find a proper union. Outside origins are emphasized, in 24:7 by Abraham's reference to being taken from his native land, and in 28:4 by reference to sojourn in Canaan. In both texts the horizon of the future is the possession of the land of Canaan, but the path to that

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[184] Scholars have noted the similarity between these two charges. See for example Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 213; Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 545 (ET, 447).

[185] The first element echoes the call of Abraham in 12:1-3; the second directly utilizes the language of the divine promise speeches, especially 12:7 and 15:18. Kenneth T. Aitken, "The Wooing of Rebekah: A Study in the Development of the Tradition," *JSOT* 30 (1984): 9; Amos, 135; Alter, *Genesis*, 113; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 142.

future is the selection of a wife from Abraham's native land. Current alienation from the land of Canaan, functioning on several levels of symbolism, serves the logic of the myth of ethnic election. The motif of alienation/sojourn heightens a sense of ethnic identity by divine appointment, and intensifies the sacred dimension of Israel's connection to its ethnoscape.

Thus far, the parallels with ch. 24 have confirmed the logic of Isaac's speech in ch. 24. Do they bring more light, however, to the question of why the marriages in each case had to be endogamous, that is, from the kin group, rather than simply non-Canaanite? Here the narrative events that unfold subsequent to each of the speeches are revealing. The parallel encounters at the well (24:10-31 and 29:1-13) and betrothal scenes (24:32-61 and 29:13-30) are fertile grounds for comparison on a number of levels, but the analysis here will focus on one aspect of similarity in the two stories, that of the tension surrounding the wives' decisions to return to Canaan.

In ch. 24 the element of tension is introduced early in the narrative with a structural marker anticipating the plot climax.[186] When Abraham commissions his servant, the servant raises a concern: what if the women is not willing to return with him to Canaan? Coats notes, "The question focuses the major crisis of the plot, the point of unity for the story."[187] The possibility of the woman's unwillingness is reiterated in vv. 8, 39, and 41.[188] Both Abraham and the servant have stressed that the woman must *want* to go.[189] The question hangs in the air through the scenes where the servant meets Rebekah and receives confirmation that she is the right wife for Isaac. V. 51 represents a step toward plot resolution: the family agrees that she may go.[190] An element of doubt retards the plot,[191] however, when the servant urges an

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[186] Lieve Teugels, "'A Strong Woman, Who Can Find?' A Study of Characterization in Genesis 24, with Some Perspectives on the General Presentation of Isaac and Rebekah in the Genesis Narratives," *JSOT* 63 (1994): 98.

[187] Coats, *Genesis*, 167.

[188] Janzen, *Abraham*, 90.

[189] Ellen J. van Wolde, "Telling and Retelling: The Words of the Servant in Genesis 24," in *Synchronic or Diachronic? A Debate on Method in Old Testament Exegesis*, ed. Johannes C. de Moor, OtSt (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), 235.

[190] For von Rad this is the decisive turning point, as he believes Rebekah's later agreement is automatically included in that of her family's. Skinner finds a discrepancy between vv. 51 and 58, viewing the two decisions as contradictory because Rebekah is consulted in one and not in the other. Sarna gives a social explanation, suggesting that her opinion might be sought on the second decision but not the first because different questions are posed; i.e., marriage vs. travel to a foreign land. Gunkel proposes two separate textual recensions, with one focused on the consent of the prospective wife and one on the family decision. I interpret the final form of the text as building up to the final climax of Rebekah's decision, and using the decision of the family as a device which heightens the drama of the final climax by creating first a false climax, then a retardation, followed by the final

immediate departure. The tension is heightened as the family first negotiates, then places the decision in the hands of Rebekah herself. In v. 58a "the entire commission hangs in the air"[192] and the story "reaches its final climax"[193] with the question to Rebekah, "Will you go?" (הֲתֵלְכִי). In v. 58b Rebekah explodes the tension with her dramatic one-word resolution, "I will go," (אֵלֵךְ). The solemn farewell blessing (v. 60) forms a poetic conclusion.

The story of Jacob's marriages and return to Canaan is more protracted, stretching over a number of chapters following ch. 28. Allowing for some variations in the plot, however, there is still a similar buildup of tension to the wives' decision. Ch. 29 recounts the meeting at the well, the extension of hospitality, and the betrothal decision. Ch. 30 reports fertility in flock and progeny for Jacob. In the middle of the chapter Jacob makes his first request to return to Canaan with his wives. As in ch. 24, Laban's first reaction is negative and the ensuing negotiations slow down the plot, initiating the buildup of suspense. At the beginning of ch. 31 the element of return is reintroduced with the dual motivation of disfavor from Laban and his sons (vv. 1-2) and a direct command from God (v. 3). Jacob does not execute the divine command at once; rather, he sends for his wives (v. 4), with the same verb "called" (קרא√) used when Rebekah was sent for to give her decision in 24:58. Jacob then delivers a lengthy speech in which he recounts Laban's disfavor, the details of God's action in bringing him prosperity (vv. 5-12), and God's command that he return to Canaan (v. 13). The implied question left hanging at the end, though unspoken, is, "Will you go?"[194] Westermann notes, "Everything now depends on the answer of Jacob's wives. It is of the utmost importance and this is expressed by the solemn, rhythmic form."[195] Rachel and Leah answer with a disavowal of Laban, a recognition of God's hand in Jacob's prosperity, and an affirmation of the duty to obey God's command and return to Canaan (vv. 14-16). Their pronouncement is the decisive turning point

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resolution. See von Rad, *Genesis*, 221 (ET, 253); Skinner, 346-47; Sarna, 175; Gunkel, *Genesis*, 244-46 (ET, 241-43).

[191] Teugels: 95.

[192] Coats, *Genesis*, 169.

[193] Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 150.

[194] Davidson and Janzen observe that the decision facing Jacob's wives resembles that before Rebekah in 24:58. Janzen, *Abraham*, 121; Davidson, 169.

[195] Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 601 (ET, 492).

and resolves the suspense.[196] In the denouement of 31:17, as in 24:61, there is rising (√קום) and riding on camels as the parties set off on their way to Canaan.[197]

In both stories, the choice of the wives is not a mere pragmatic decision. The lengthy speeches of the servant (24:34-49) and Jacob (31:5-13) both set the terms of the subsequent decision using two elements. The first element is a recounting of past events, attributing success to the guiding hand of God. The servant narrates the story of meeting Rebekah as evidence that God was guiding him to her;[198] Jacob tells how he multiplied his flocks as evidence that his wealth was divinely granted.[199] The second element is a reference to God's past action in directing the steps of the patriarch toward migration to Canaan. Jacob tells of God's appearances to him;[200] the servant references God's leading of Abraham.[201] The resulting logic runs as follows: (1) God called the male patriarch to migrate to Canaan, (2) the same God has given success to the current venture, and (3) now the female matriarch-to-be is called upon to give consent to another migration to Canaan, her own. In both cases, recognizing God's guidance of preceding events is the prompt for positive response to the request for migration.[202] In other words, God's providential direction of the narrated events

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[196] Coats notes that their pronouncement also resolves the mounting tension of the previous chapter recording the sisters' rivalry; here for the first time they act and speak in unison. Coats, *Genesis*, 218.

[197] Turner notes that this migration also parallels Abraham's original migration. "Jacob sets off, taking his wives, children, livestock and property (31.17-18), following Abraham who had taken his wife, Lot, possessions and property and journeyed to Canaan (12.5). Indeed, the phrase 'to the land of Canaan'…occurs here for the first time since 12.5. The patriarchal story restarts." Turner, *Genesis*, 135.

[198] Direct references to God's guidance in this speech occur in 24:40, 42, 44, and 48, and again in the servant's final appeal in 24:56; Laban and Bethuel's answer sums up the crux of the matter with their confirmation, "The matter comes from the Lord" (24:50). The theme is set in motion earlier in the chapter in vv. 7, 12, 14, 21, and 27. K.T. Aitken gives a detailed analysis of the theme of guidance in this chapter. Brueggemann has identified the sub-motif of "appointment" in vv. 14, 44; and W.M.W. Roth has noted the usage of the verb √נחה to mean "leading" in vv. 27, 48, unique here in Genesis. See Aitken: 3-23; Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 200; Roth: 178-79.

[199] Jacob's attributes his success to God's guidance in 31:5, 7, 9, and 12. See Coats, *Genesis*, 218; Amos, 193.

[200] Jacob cites both God's promise to him at Bethel (where God guaranteed Jacob's return to Canaan) and God's fresh command to him to leave Paddan-aram and return to Canaan, 31:13.

[201] Abraham's servant alludes to Abraham's migration by reference to Canaan as his place of residence and Paddan-aram as the place of his kinship (24:37-38), and by the statement that Abraham "walked before" God (24:40). The latter statement, however, is in direct parallel with Abraham's speech to his servant, where he explicitly speaks of God's call to him to leave his native land and come to Canaan, the land which is divinely given to his offspring (24:7). Since the speech of the servant parallels Abraham's speech in all but a few details, the reference to Abraham's walking before God may be taken as a shorthand, if less explicit, reference to Abraham's migration under the prompting of the promise.

[202] While the longer speech of the servant precedes the earlier and first decision of the family, rather than Rebekah, it is a part of the narrative build-up to her decision; moreover, his final summation just

functions for the females as the theophanies and associated promise speeches functioned for the males: divine action enters into the realm of their lives, and the response requested of them is a migration to Canaan.

The speeches of Jacob and the servant thus present the events that have passed as a call of God to the matriarch, a call that parallels the calls received by their male counterparts. The narrative places tremendous focus on the independent and direct speech of the woman in response to this call. Each of the three wives, in the climax of the narrative, delivers a powerful, unequivocally positive statement that she will indeed migrate to Canaan. Rebekah's words evoke the response of Abraham to God's first command of migration, suggesting that her action is also an obedient response to divine instruction (24:58).[203] Rachel and Leah's speech directly expresses their desire that God's command of migration be obeyed (31:16). The three women's moments of decision are spotlighted by a narrative that has framed the choice of wife in the framework of the divine promises. Each woman speaks an affirmation of her decision to recognize the hand of God in unfolding events, to affirm the original call of God to the patriarch to migrate to Canaan, and to undertake her own migration from Paddan-aram to Canaan. Each woman, then, individually enters into the central ethnic myth of the narrative. The central elements of ethnic election and sacred ethnoscape are highlighted in the story of each of the wives, and each of their stories contributes to these vital themes. The promise narratives inscribe the shape of Israel's ethnic identity not only through the promises to the fathers, but also the call of the mothers.[204]

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before her decision repeats the element of divine guidance of his venture and the imperative of return to Canaan (24:56).

[203] Many scholars have traced a parallel in the narrative between Rebekah and Abraham, noting her departure from kin and native land to an unknown future, the particular vocabulary used to describe this choice, the blessing formula she receives, and also her traits of active hospitality which parallel those of Abraham, especially in ch. 18. This parallel has not been connected, however, to the story of Rachel and Leah's similar decision to migrate, nor to the larger discussion around the question of patriarchal endogamy. See Aitken: 22 n. 25; Amos, 135-39; Coats, *Genesis*, 169; Fretheim, "Genesis," 509-11; Susanne Gillmayr-Bucher, "The Woman of their Dreams: The Image of Rebekah in Genesis 24," in *The World of Genesis: Persons, Places, Perspectives*, ed. Philip R. Davies and David J.A. Clines, JSOTSup 257 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 95, 99-100; Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 141, 147, 159; Janzen, *Abraham*, 90; Roth: 178-79; Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading*, Indiana Literary Biblical Series (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 138; Teugels: 97-98, 102; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 138-55; van Wolde, 235-38.

[204] De Pury analyzes the Jacob narrative as a legend of origin, emphasizing the importance of the clan mothers' separation from the original kinship group as a part of the process of forming a new group. He interprets Rachel and Leah's decision here, however, solely as a victory attributed to Jacob in his journey toward establishing autonomous group identity for his descendants. My reading locates some

We return now to the question, Why do the charges of 28:1-4 and 24:2-8 insist on the selection of wives for the patriarchs from the kin group resident in Paddan-aram? Neither text gives an explicit reason for the instruction. Both texts, however, narrate a sequence of events whereby the wives from the kin group make momentous decisions to answer divine prompting and undertake a migration from Paddan-aram to Canaan. In doing this, the wives become active participants in the central elements of Israel's ethnic myth as told in the stories of the patriarchs: they leave the land of their origin, and go to a new land appointed as sacred ethnoscape by divine grant; they leave their kin, and define their identity instead by the divine promise of a new *ethnie* founded by divine election. The underlying logic of sojourn, with all its symbolic freight, is the prominent logic in both stories. As the promises called Abraham and Jacob to sojourn, leaving Paddan-aram for Canaan, Rebekah, Rachel, and Leah are called in these stories to sojourn as well.[205] They migrate to Canaan, following divine prompting, and add their individual stories to the central ethnic myth of Israel's origins. Had the matriarchs not been from Paddan-aram and the same kin group, their stories could not have paralleled those of the patriarchs so closely. Whether or not this parallel with the call of the patriarchs is the direct reason for the endogamy imperative recorded in our texts,[206] the parallel does unfold in the

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aspects of heroism, and thus contribution to the ethnic myth, in the female characters of the story as well. See de Pury, 86.

[205] Isaac also is commanded to sojourn, as discussed previously in the analysis of 26:3, though his obedience does not involve a migration from Paddan-aram to Canaan. Highlighting Isaac's inclusion in the sojourn logic of the promises includes him in the grad tally of the patriarchs and matriarchs who sojourn in Canaan. M.D. Turner argues that Rebekah's migration to Canaan *replaces* Isaac's, positioning her as the female substitute for the patriarch. My focus on sojourn logic rather than concrete migration alone allows for Isaac's inclusion in the ethnic myth along with his wife; both are portrayed as exemplars of virtue. See Mary Donovan Turner, "Rebekah: Ancestor of Faith," *LTQ* 20, no. 2 (1985): 43.

[206] Many alternative interpretations exist for patriarchal endogamy in Genesis. The lack of consensus is evidence, however, that no single interpretation has successfully answered all the questions raised by the texts under consideration. The interpretation given here is not an attempt to give a comprehensive rationale for patriarchal endogamy, but rather to set the question in the context of the narrative drama in Genesis, and especially to relate it to the central theme of the promises and the related motif of sojourn.

Some scholars have related patriarchal endogamy to the promises, although the connection is often made in a general fashion and not with the narrative explication above. See Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 237; Cohn, 82; Turner, *Genesis*, 102.

Other scholars connect patriarchal endogamy with historical circumstances at the time the texts of Genesis were written; e.g., an emphasis on endogamy in J reflects David's political alliances, and in P reflects exilic/post-exilic concern for issues of purity and assimilation. For the latter see the previous footnote on Priestly concerns about intermarriage; for the former, see Coote and Ord, 149-50.

Alternative explanations utilize sociological or structural-anthropological models to explain patriarchal endogamy, usually with a focus on the maintenance of ethnic boundaries. While such

narrative, and the two stories highlight the parallel with powerful symbolic effect. From the start, Paddan-aram is described with words that evoke the original divine call: "Go to my land and my kin" (24:4), the very things that Abraham was called to leave (12:1).[207] The women relatives in Paddan-aram are the divinely chosen wives for the patriarchs not simply because of a quality inherent in the area or the kin group, but because of the overarching logic of the promise which will call them to leave that precise land and kin group, following the same path as their male counterparts. Sojourn is so important a part of the ethnic myth that the narrative gives not only to the group of Israel's ancestors, but also to each individual within it, a moment of decision in which they too commit to it. In the promise speech of 28:1-4 and its broader narrative context, sojourn is a key contributor to the election myth that includes not only Israel's patriarchs, but its matriarchs as well. As in the sojourn command to Isaac, sojourn here is portrayed as a path of obedience, one in which all the founding ancestors individually, both male and female, have personally chosen to walk.

Conclusion

In the promise speeches of Genesis, sojourn contributes to ethnic identity primarily by supporting the myth of ethnic election. This ethnic election myth forges a strong bond between Israel and its land by elevating the connection between them to a sacred status. Israel belongs in Canaan not by origin, but by destiny. Sojourn is a key element in sacralizing Israel's connection to Canaan. Ancestral sojourn in

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approaches resemble my use of Smith's ethnic theory, they de-emphasize or disregard the land promise theme highlighted by the narrative context (some studies focus on inheritance, an issue indirectly related to the land promise). Some examples of sociological interpretations of endogamy in Genesis are Mara E. Donaldson, "Kinship Theory in the Patriarchal Narratives: The Case of the Barren Wife," *JAAR* 49 no. 1 (1981): 77-87; Kunin, 56-61, 261-66; Robert A. Oden, Jr., "Jacob as Father, Husband, and Nephew: Kinship Studies and the Patriarchal Narratives," *JBL* 102, no. 2 (1983): 189-205; Terry J. Prewitt, "Kinship Structures and the Genesis Genealogies," *JNES* 40, no. 2 (1981): 87-98; Naomi Steinberg, "Alliance or Descent? The Function of Marriage in Genesis," *JSOT* 51 (1991): 45-55.

C.J. Exum and C. Meyers offer interesting feminist readings of patriarchal endogamy. These readings also draw upon sociological interpretations of endogamy as boundary maintenance. Ironically, feminist readings of endogamy interpret women's roles in the patriarchal narratives in a more negative light than my reading above. Cheryl J. Exum, *Fragmented Women: Feminist (Sub)versions of Biblical Narratives*, JSOTSup 163 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 104, 107-20; Carol Meyers, *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 181-88.

[207] Alter, *Genesis*, 113.

Canaan, introduced explicitly in ch. 17 but referenced directly or indirectly in all four texts, signals Israel's origins elsewhere. Paradoxically, these outside origins heighten the election of Israel as the *ethnie* destined by divine charter—and not merely natural processes—for ethnic realization in the land of Canaan.

In chs. 15 and 17 sojourn encapsulates a state of non-realization for the *ethnie*, the periods in Egypt and Canaan that will ultimately be reversed by divine action. Both the divine appointment of this negative period and the divine affirmation of ultimate resolution make sojourn function as a dark foil that brings out the sparkle in the jewel that is at the center of the promises: the divine election of Israel for establishment in the land of Canaan, over and against the logic of both autochthony (the natives dispossessed) and natural might (oppressor Egypt vanquished).

The paradoxical function of sojourn in buttressing ethnic identity, however, is not limited to the historical memory of the ancestors as sojourners. The cyclical pattern implied in ch. 15 suggests a possible pattern of repeated future sojourn for the *ethnie*, and continued championing of the deity for the elected people. The connection of election with sojourn, then, may not be only in the past. Ch. 26 expands this possibility. The command to Isaac to sojourn, and the depiction of blessing in his life as he obeys, sketches a portrait of a divinely-mandated sojourn "lifestyle" that can serve as a resource for ongoing ethical emulation by the *ethnie*. Here sojourn is expanded beyond a memory to a model, offering a paradigm for a relationship to the land that emphasizes symbolic connection over concrete possession. According to Smith's theory, such ties are the most effective in grounding ethnic identity. The strength comes from an emphasis on ethnic election over territorial possession, an accent which allows for greater flexibility and resilience in ethnic identification regardless of concrete circumstances. In ch. 28, the promise (or myth of election) is made dependent upon the continued choice by individuals joining the *ethnie*—the matriarchs—to own the election myth themselves, and commit to sojourn individually. Once again sojourn intensifies the election myth, but here by accentuating individual decision alongside the original divine initiative.

Sojourn in the promise speeches shows a gradual transformation from negative foil to positive model, from past experience to present paradigm, and from limited time period to long-range possibility. The horizon of meaning for sojourn is beginning to expand, setting the stage for the texts analyzed next in Chapter Four,

where sojourn is intimately joined to ethical action. In the past two chapters, sojourn has proven to bring strength to the ethnic myth by intensifying both the elements of territorial identification and of ethnic election. We have also seen in this chapter a hint at sojourn's ability to strengthen the ethnic myth by endowing it with directive capacity for action. In the next chapter, this aspect takes center stage.

CHAPTER FOUR
Constructing Relational Ethics: Sojourn in the Dialogues

Genesis includes six references to sojourn in dialogue form, that is, in speeches or messages between characters in a narrative setting (19:9; 21:23; 23:4; 32:5; 47:4, 9). These references occur in contexts of inter-relationship between the patriarchs on the one side, and on the other, characters who are settled inhabitants of their locations (the men of Sodom, Abimelech of Gerar, Ephron the Hittite, Laban the Aramean, and the Pharaoh of Egypt). The sojourn references thus offer opportunities for reflection on the dynamics of interaction between the patriarchs as outsiders, or temporary residents, and the people with whom they come in contact. These reflections tend to be of an ethical nature, relating the behavior of the patriarchs (positively or negatively) to an implicit or explicit standard of goodness advanced by the text. Discussions of ethical messages in the patriarchal narratives can become lengthy and mired in ambiguity; a thorough exploration of the questions raised by each text is beyond the scope of this project. The aims of this study include attending to some of the ethical issues raised by the sojourn texts, but not the full unpacking of the moral implications of these issues. Rather, the discussion will continue to bring analysis of ethical interactions back to questions of ethnic identity, utilizing A.D. Smith's concepts to examine the way in which the ethics of sojourn suggested in the patriarchal narratives contribute to Israel's ethnic myth.

As discussed in Chapter One, Smith's understanding of ethnic myth emphasizes its role in deploying stories from the past to direct the *ethnie* toward communal action. Ancestral stories supply "maps" and "moralities" for the ethnic future by portraying the virtues of the heroes who founded the *ethnie*.[1] These models are meant to inspire present generations of the *ethnie* to emulate these virtues, which express ethnic values and sustain them.[2] Founding legends thus personalize ethnic history, depicting in story form how individual members of the *ethnie* can realize its values.[3] In this way the past provides "essential blueprints" for the ethnic future, providing a guide, or "morality," for the tasks required in traveling toward the goal

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[1] Smith, *Chosen*, 217; Smith, *Antiquity*, 224; Smith, *National*, 65-66.
[2] Smith, *National*, 64-65.
[3] Smith, *Origins*, 192.

of ethnic realization.[4] Reading the Genesis narratives as ethnic myth allows an examination of the ways in which the heroism of the ancestors serves as a "rough-and-ready compass," pointing members of the *ethnie* toward the values of the community, and galvanizing them toward the achievement of a collective future.[5]

In each of the texts below, sojourn is associated with a particular virtue exemplified by the actions of the patriarch. These "sojourn virtues" are depicted in the context of interaction with outsiders to the *ethnie*. Occurring at the boundary of the *ethnie's* identity, the virtues exemplify how the *ethnie* defines itself over and against the Other. The embodied virtues of the ancestral stories thus point to central values at the core of ethnic identity. In accord with Smith's understanding of ethnic myth, these values relate closely both to the construction of an ethnoscape and to the concept of ethnic election. The following analysis explicates the virtue depicted by each text in turn, teasing out in each case the relationship of this virtue to territoriality and election. The aim of the analysis, as has been thus far, is to examine the ways in which sojourn contributes to both these elements, and thus works to bolster Israelite ethnic identity.

Genesis 19:9

The reference to sojourn in 19:9 occurs at the center of the suspenseful account of the destruction of Sodom. After the men of Sodom have demanded that Lot hand over his guests and Lot has made a counter offer, they round on him and say, "This one came as a sojourner, and he is playing the judge! Now we will treat you worse than them!" They follow their threat with an attack on Lot and his door. The townsmen's threat to Lot is the final element in the plot buildup that brings the events in Sodom to their climax. Until this point the fate of Sodom has not yet been decided. In the next verse (19:10), however, the messengers rescue Lot from the mob and reveal their divine power with a supernatural strike at the men outside. Next the sequence of Lot's deliverance and the city's destruction is rapidly set in motion. V. 19 thus represents the decisive moment on which the plot turns. The events in Sodom, in their turn, stand at the center of a larger narrative complex stretching from 18:1 to

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[4] Smith, *Chosen*, 215-17.
[5] Smith, *Antiquity*, 223-24.

19:38.[6] Within this larger unit, 19:9 stands at the structural center of the plot and gathers together the primary themes of the narrative. The reference to sojourn in 19:9 carries a heavy symbolic freight, serving as an apt focal point for the message of the narrative as a whole.

The following analysis falls into four parts: first, an analysis of the structure of the overarching narrative, showing the pivotal role of 19:9; second, a discussion of the themes set in place by the broad narrative framework of chs. 18 and 19; third, a detailed textual study of the sojourn reference in 19:9 within its immediate narrative context, and fourth, a thematic summation of the analysis.

A. Sojourn in the Structure of the Larger Sodom Narrative

Several literary devices signpost the structure of the narrative. The first of these devices is temporal and is indicated by chronological markers such as day and night, as well as visual cues such as light and darkness. The temporal structure of the narrative may be depicted as follows:

A Midday (18:1-33)

B   Evening (19:1-3)

C   Night (19:4-14)

B′   Dawn (19:15-22) and sunrise (19:23-26)

A′ Early morning (19:27-29)

Coda: Evenings in the cave (19:30-38)

The narrative starts at midday (18:1, "the heat of the day"), with the visit of the three men to Abraham taking up the rest of the day. The messengers arrive in Sodom in the evening (19:1). The decisive confrontation with the men of Sodom occurs late at night, "before they lay down" (19:4). Lot is outside in the darkness with the men when they issue their threat to him in 19:9. Following this pivotal moment in the dead of the night, the messengers stun the men of Sodom with blindness; the visual scene for them becomes totally blank. They then leave the townsmen out in the dark as they pull Lot back into the house, the story moves on toward morning, and the messengers initiate Lot's departure (19:12). At dawn (9:15)

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[6] The discussion below will demonstrate the unity of structure and themes in this larger narrative. For a detailed argument defending the unity of chs. 18 and 19, see Robert Ignatius Letellier, *Day in Mamre, Night in Sodom: Abraham and Lot in Genesis 18 and 19*, Biblical Interpretation Series 10 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), 31-41.

the messengers drag Lot from the city, and by the time the sun has fully risen Lot is safe in Zoar (19:24). God destroys Sodom, and in the early part of the morning (19:27) Abraham looks toward the land of the Plain and sees the smoke of the destruction. Twilight follows both literally and ethically as Lot shelters in the half-light of a cave, and two evenings of drunkenness and incest are recorded (19:33, 35). The narrative shifts here from the detailed chronology of the two days in which Sodom was tested and judged, to a more open framework of repetition with only a general sense of the passage of time. In the final verses of the chapter the time frame becomes much broader, covering the time from conception to birth of the two sons, and then the continuance of the names "until this day" (19:37-38).

The temporal development of the narrative thus places the townsmen's threat to Lot in the center of its meticulously chronicled two-day span. The incident happens in the middle of the night and represents a temporal turning point, after which the protagonists begin to look toward the events of the morning to come ("we are about to destroy this place," 19:13). It also represents a turning point in the plot, with the visual imagery carrying symbolic significance on an ethical register.[7] The light of day provides the temporal setting for the visit to Abraham, which involves much talk of righteousness and the evident narrative display of it as well. The light dwindles as the visitors encounter Lot, a more ambiguous figure, as well as the city of Sodom which has not yet cemented its fate. The darkness deepens into night in tune with the townsmen's violent aggression toward Lot and his guests, which crescendos in 19:9 in a clear depiction of evil intent. Immediately the narrative turns toward morning and what it will bring, with new clarity in the divine decision regarding the city (19:13). The full light of the sun reveals the final and complete obliteration of the city that had been so dark.

Spatial devices also aid in the structuring of the narrative. The narrative is attentive to details of location throughout, with special emphasis at its climax on the

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[7] W.W. Fields notes a similar temporal progression but focuses on its significance for issues of safety: "The chronological markers indicate a progressively more dangerous time of day from evening through full night, and a progressively more safe time from dawn to full day." L.M. Bechtel links the increasing darkness with a mounting lack of clarity in discerning 'good and bad.' Weston W. Fields, *Sodom and Gomorrah: History and Motif in Biblical Narrative*, JSOTSup 231 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 86; Lynn M. Bechtel, "Boundary Issues in Genesis 19.1-38," in *Escaping Eden: New Feminist Perspectives on the Bible*, ed. Harold C. Washington, Susan Lochrie Graham, and Pamela Thimmes (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 27-28.

outside/inside boundary embodied in the door to Lot's house and its potential breach. The location of 19:9 within the spatial structure of the narrative may be plotted thus:[8]

A Mamre (18:1-15)

B Sodom overlook (18:16-33)

C   Journey to Sodom, simultaneous with B (18:16-33)

D   Boundary of Sodom (19:1-2)

E   Inside Lot's house (19:3)

F   Door of Lot's house (19:4-9)

E′   Inside Lot's house (19:10-15)

D′   Boundary of Sodom (19:16-22)

C′   Journey away from Sodom, simultaneous with B′? (19:23-26)

B′ Sodom overlook (19:27-29)

A′ --

Coda: Unnamed cave above Zoar (19:30-38)

The story begins in Mamre (18:1). After a meal the visitors start toward Sodom, with Abraham setting them on their way (18:16). Abraham has a conversation with God as the men go on to Sodom (18:22). The messengers arrive in Sodom, encountering Lot at the point of entrance to the city boundary, its gateway (19:1). Lot brings them into the city and into his house (19:3). The men of Sodom surround the house and Lot guards its entrance, the door (19:6). The townsmen threaten Lot and at the climax of their attack are about to break through the door (19:9). The inner space surprisingly breaks into the outer instead, as the messengers open the door from within (19:10). They pull Lot inside and blind the townsmen, who are then unable to reach the door (19:11). The messengers then repeatedly urge Lot to leave the city (19:12, 15), and eventually lead him out by the hand (19:16). Just outside the city (19:17) they have a conversation, which leads to Lot's flight to Zoar (19:23, 26). God destroys Sodom, and Abraham goes to the place of their conversation the day before (19:27) and views the smoke of the destruction. The narrative returns to Lot, who now takes refuge in an unnamed cave in the hills above

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[8] Cf. Wenham's analysis of the structure of the narrative, which emphasizes elements of dialogue alongside temporal and spatial devices, resulting in a slightly different chart that nevertheless shares the overall chiastic shape of those above. J.A. Loader also proposes a chiastic structure, but his chart is less detailed. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 41; J.A. Loader, *A Tale of Two Cities: Sodom and Gomorrah in the Old Testament, early Jewish and early Christian Traditions*, CBET 1 (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1990), 15.

Zoar (19:30); like the temporal devices used for this scene, the location is indefinite and perhaps archetypal.[9]

The narrative is also structured by the buildup of tension through the development of a plot. In this structure, the townsmen's threat in 19:9 forms the climactic moment. The arc of tension in the narrative develops around the question, "Will there be righteous people found in Sodom?"[10] The theme is developed by use of the word pair "righteous" and "just" (צדק√ and שפט√), in contrast with the antonyms "wicked" and "evil" (רשע√ and רעע√). The narrative begins by depicting Abraham offering generous hospitality (18:1-15). A soliloquy from God follows in which he affirms Abraham's election and his responsibility to teach righteousness and justice, צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט, to the nation he will father (18:19). God and Abraham converse about God's judgment on Sodom, with the city's fate riding on how many righteous individuals are to be found among the wicked majority. During this dialogue (18:23-32), "righteous," צַדִּיק, is mentioned seven times and "wicked," רָשָׁע, three times. In his plea for the city, Abraham appeals to God's role as judge (שֹׁפֵט) of all the earth as grounds for just action (מִשְׁפָּט) on the part of God (18:25).

The messengers then come to Sodom. Will they find righteous people there? Is Lot, whom they encounter at the gate, a righteous man? The suspense mounts as the evening passes. The men of Sodom surround Lot's home and make their demand, and Lot begs them not to "act wickedly," תָּרֵעוּ, thus branding their intentions as wrong (19:7). They react with rejection of his authority to make this moral judgment, accusing him of "playing judge," וַיִּשְׁפֹּט שָׁפוֹט, and follow their denunciation with a threat to "treat him wickedly," נָרַע לְךָ even more than they will the guests—a confirmation placed upon their own lips that their intentions are indeed wicked (19:9). They then launch a physical assault on Lot and the doorway to his house. In this verse the drama reaches its height, as the inhabitants of Sodom both show and tell the answer to the plot's question. After 19:9 the action moves quickly forward, with no questions to be deliberated and little tension to be resolved. There has been a clear verdict on Sodom's wickedness, and the consequences recorded are straightforward. The text makes no further mention of good or evil. It has been decided that the city will be destroyed (19:13), and it is.

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[9] Letellier, 233.
[10] Ibid., 53.

A secondary question still hangs in the air regarding the status of Lot and his family. First, will his sons-in-law be saved? The answer comes quickly, in the negative (19:14). Some tension is then generated around Lot's retardation of his departure from the city, an element which contributes to the portrayal of Lot as indistinct with regard to the righteous/wicked polarity in the story. Overall, however, the narrative description of Sodom's destruction is mere denouement, with no elements of surprise except for the unexpected inclusion of Lot's wife in the destruction—by her own action—just when it seems that Lot's nuclear family has all escaped (19:26). Even in the deeply ambiguous coda telling of Lot's incest with his daughters, there is no recurrence of ethical vocabulary. The speech in 19:9, it seems, has said all that needs saying with regard to the plot's central question of righteousness and justice.

In the structure of chs. 18-19, then, the townsmen's threat to Lot in 19:9 is the climactic turning point. On the one hand, spatial and temporal descriptions are arranged chiastically, with the scene at Lot's door in the centre of the concentric circles.[11] On the other hand, suspense builds in an arc from the posing of the question of righteousness early in the story to the conclusive exposé of wickedness in the townsmen's threat to Lot in 19:9, which delivers the dramatic answer. After this point, the consequences of the verdict spin out predictably as the various threads of the plot are brought to a point of closure and the second half of the chiastic structure neatly unfurls. 19:9 thus is both the climax and the turning point in the structure of the Sodom narrative. Having established the central importance of 19:9 in the structure of the narrative, we turn now to a discussion of the story's key themes, first as they are set up by the prelude, and then as they are brought into sharp focus in 19:9 itself.

B. Hospitality, Righteousness, and Justice in Genesis 18

Ch. 18 begins with the story of Abraham's lavish hospitality to three surprise visitors. Scholars have noted the striking similarities between the account of Abraham's hospitality and that of Lot's in ch. 19.[12] The correspondence between the two episodes augments the complexity of the narrative structure, as a parallel

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[11] The two chiastic structures do not coincide precisely, but they act to partially reinforce each other, with the action at Lot's door in the middle of the night forming the centerpiece of both structures.

[12] For detailed lists of the similarities between chs. 18 and 19 see Van Seters, *Abraham*, 215-16; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 43-44; Letellier, 64-66.

progression develops alongside the concentric movement described above.[13] The stories of the two men begin in similar fashion with their reception of their visitors. The two stories move in quite different directions, however, prompting the question of whether any disparities in hospitality between the two men can account for their divergent fates. Scholars have parsed the slight variations between the two men in gesture, phrasing, level of haste, summons to their family, and bread recipes, with significantly differing conclusions.[14] Lot's offer of his daughters to the men of Sodom in an effort to protect his guests is also variously interpreted as either boosting or diminishing the register of his hospitality.[15] Since opinions remain divided regarding the quality of Lot's hospitality in comparison with Abraham's, it is safe to conclude that the narrative does not communicate a decisive comparative valuation of the two characters in their roles as hosts.[16]

What the narrative does do clearly is draw a portrait of two men practicing hospitality against a backdrop of sharply contrasting hostility. Scholars generally agree that the narrative sets the hospitality of Abraham and Lot in contrast with that

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[13] Wenham and R.I. Letellier note the same two structures, with some differences in terminology and details of the structure. Wenham uses the terms "palistrophe" and "parallel panel," and Letellier "symmetrical inversion" and "parallel movement." Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 44; Letellier, 64-70.

[14] Nearly every commentary compares the features of the two characters' hospitality. Interpretations are at times in direct contradiction to one another; for example, Lot's prostration can be gracious or overly servile, his unleavened bread can be mere "hurriedly baked flat flaps" or is in fact "superior," and urging his guests can be hospitable welcome or resistance to the plan of God. For the examples cited see T. Desmond Alexander, "Lot's Hospitality: A Clue to His Righteousness," *JBL* 104, no. 2 (1985): 290; Bechtel, 25 n. 5; Sharon Pace Jeansonne, "The Characterization of Lot in Genesis," *BTB* 18 (1988): 126; Speiser, *Genesis*, 139, 143.

[15] For example, H. Gossai comments, "His act of protection of those who are strangers stands in sharp and disturbing contrast to the abandonment and abnegation of his responsibility to those who are members of his own family. This is a distorted and perverted hospitality…" In contrast, Skinner paints Lot as "a courageous champion of the obligations of hospitality" and Thompson calls him "a paragon of the virtue of hospitality." Hemchand Gossai, *Power and Marginality in the Abraham Narrative* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1995), 85; Skinner, 307; Thompson, *Origin*, 93.

[16] The narrative does make an overarching comparison of the two men, a point which this discussion will address below. The comparison does not ride, however, on the assessment of the details of their hospitality. The aim of the parallel between the two men is not so much a comparison between them, as a contrast between their shared general approach and the reception the men of Sodom give to their guests. In arguing this my analysis comes closer to the side of those scholars arguing for a similarity between Lot's hospitality and Abraham's. My argument, however, is based not on a conclusion that the two men offer equal measures of hospitality, but on the rationale that the narrative at this point intends something other than a comparative measuring of the two against each other. For a similar argument see Laurence A. Turner, "Lot as Jekyll and Hyde: A Reading of Genesis 18-19," in *The Bible in Three Dimensions: Essays in Celebration of Forty Years of Biblical Studies in the University of Sheffield*, ed. David J.A. Clines, Stephen E. Fowl, and Stanley E. Porter, JSOTSup 87 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 90-93.

of Sodom.[17] Sodom's treatment of its visitors will receive more detailed attention in the close textual analysis below. Here, however, the question regards the contribution that the account of Abraham's hospitality makes to the unfolding story of Sodom and its fate. The vivid depiction of Abraham's interaction with his guests certainly sets the scene for the subsequent drama of their reception in Sodom. Two thematic aspects of this prelude stand out as particularly relevant for our discussion.

First, the scenes with Abraham and his visitors draw a connection between human hospitality and divine action. Some scholars interpret this connection quite strongly, calling the visit to Abraham a "test" of his virtue and the subsequent promise of a child (18:10) a "reward" for his successful performance.[18] Gunkel uses parallels from ancient and modern folklore to illustrate the pattern of hospitality tested and rewarded,[19] and later commentaries often follow his lead.[20] Other scholars reject the logic of reward, preferring the term "gift" and loosening the connection between Abraham's hospitality and the visitors' promise of a child. Westermann, for example, distinguishes between this story and its proposed Greek parallels, noting that there is "a great difference whether the promise of the child is a gift from the guest or a reward for proper behavior."[21] Von Rad writes, "the narrator, without letting the promise of a son cease to be a real gift…prefaces it with a certain general test for the recipient of God's most elementary commands."[22] Abraham's hospitality is still seen as significant and exemplary, but the correlation with the promised child is not direct. Fretheim, however, rejects the language of both reward and gift entirely, citing the previous promise in ch. 17 as evidence that Abraham's hospitality is unrelated to the promise given in ch. 18.[23]

The language of the text does not draw an explicit connection between Abraham's hospitality and the renewed promise of a child given at the end of the meal. The two elements follow each other in quick narrative succession, however, and at the very least prompt a question about their correlation. At this point in the

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[17] Coote and Ord, 124; Fields, 41; Heard, 51-52; K. Renato Lings, "Culture Clash in Sodom: Patriarchal Tales of Heroes, Villains, and Manipulation," in *Patriarchs, Prophets, and Other Villains*, ed. Lisa Isherwood, Gender, Theology and Spirituality (London: Equinox, 2007), 186; Miller, 556; Turner, *Genesis*, 86; Vawter, 232. For a differing view see Van Seters, *Abraham*, 212.

[18] E.g., Letellier, 54; Thompson, *Origin*, 91.

[19] Gunkel, *Genesis*, 193-99 (ET, 192-98).

[20] See for example Davidson, 63; Skinner, 302-03; Vawter, 227.

[21] Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 334 (ET, 276).

[22] See von Rad, *Genesis*, 177 (ET, 204).

[23] Fretheim, "Genesis," 462.

narrative the connection is merely suggested; the faint lines, however, are more boldly drawn in the events to follow. The story at this point only tells that Abraham, the ancestor of Israel, welcomes strangers with largesse, and in the course of his offering hospitality he receives from his guests an assurance that he will have descendants. The hint is that an ethic of hospitality corresponds in some way to ethnic realization, the establishment of communal identity.

The second thematic contribution of ch. 18 is the association of hospitality with larger issues of righteousness and justice, צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט. This idea is developed in the section following the meal scene, from v. 16 to 33. The first association of hospitality with righteousness and justice is in v. 19. Here God speaks in soliloquy, pondering a disclosure to Abraham of the plan regarding Sodom, in light of God's election of Abraham to become a nation. God goes on to say: I have chosen Abraham *so that* (לְמַעַן) he may instruct his descendants to keep the way of Yahweh by doing righteousness and justice (צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט), *so that* (לְמַעַן) Yahweh will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him (18:19). In other words, when Abraham and his descendants do justice and righteousness, God will fulfill the promises made to Abraham.[24] In this speech, election leads to ethics, which in turn lead to the fulfillment of divine promises. The well-rehearsed content of these promises—land, progeny, divine accompaniment, and blessing to the nations—can be expressed in the shorthand of "ethnic realization." Ethnic realization, then, is here made conditional upon ethical behavior. As Alter puts it, "Survival and propagation, then, depend on the creation of a just society."[25]

Looking back, it becomes evident that the logic of this speech parallels the logic of the story preceding it, underscoring it and broadening its scope. In the first episode hospitality led to ethnic realization; here, righteousness and justice lead to ethnic realization. The narrative is beginning to put in place, then, an association of hospitality with righteousness/justice. The two virtues are both human actions that

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[24] Westermann argues that the conditional nature of the promise here is evidence of its origin in later, postexilic circles where piety consisted of "observing righteousness and justice." Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 351 (ET, 289). See the earlier discussion of Gen. 26:3 for my analysis of conditional logic in the promises.

[25] Robert Alter, "Sodom as Nexus: The Web of Design in Biblical Narrative," in *The Book and the Text: The Bible and Literary Theory*, ed. Regina Schwartz (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 150.

lead to divine action in establishing the ethnic community, and in this story, the two virtues may be equivalent.[26]

The second association of hospitality with righteousness and justice occurs in the conversation between God and Abraham, which begins in v. 20. In the dialogue, a number of phrases and images evoke the impression of a judicial process.[27] Some scholars have dissected the passage into components corresponding with court procedures, continuing the metaphor through ch. 19 where the visit to Sodom comprises eyewitness evidence, verdict, and the final sentence.[28] Two particular aspects of this judicial process relate to our discussion of hospitality.

God begins the process by speaking of an outcry (זְעָקָה / צְעָקָה) against Sodom, an outcry which is associated with its great sin (18:20-21). This outcry has been described as the initial complaint or demand for redress that sets the juridical process in motion; it is a cry for the execution of justice.[29] What is striking about the word is its frequent use in contexts of oppression and social injustice.[30] The cry comes from the powerless innocent who are exploited and maltreated, and who in their suffering and distress seek protection from one who would champion them.[31] The outcry of Sodom, presumably, comes also from marginalized victims of oppression. In 18:20-21 God hears their outcry, and descends to investigate the

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[26] Some scholars interpret the phrase "righteousness and justice" in light of its usage elsewhere in the canon to indicate the overall code of behavior required by the covenant. In proposing an equivalence between hospitality and "righteousness and justice" in chs. 18 and 19, I am not arguing against this broader interpretation of the phrase. Rather, I suggest that the narrative here fills out what righteous and just behavior looks like in concrete terms by painting a portrait of hospitality. Righteousness and justice in this story are enacted in hospitality, so that hospitality can stand in for the broader concept as an example of it; this is not the same as exhausting the concept. For the argument that "righteousness" in the HB communicates varied nuances of meaning defined by its narrative context, see David J. Reimer, "צדק," in *NIDOTTE*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996), 750. For interpretations of the phrase "righteousness and justice" in light of its usage in other texts, see Amos, 104-06; Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 169; Davidson, 68; Timothy D. Lytton, "'Shall Not the Judge of the Earth Deal Justly?': Accountability, Compassion, and Judicial Authority in the Biblical Story of Sodom and Gomorrah," *Journal of Law and Religion* 18, no. 1 (2002-2003): 36.

[27] For discussion of these legal referents see Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Treasures Old and New: Essays in the Theology of the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2004), 125-27; Fretheim, "Genesis," 467-68; Letellier, 115; Loader, 29; Lytton: 36; Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 353 (ET, 290).

[28] See Bruckner's detailed analysis, and especially his summary of the flow of the juridical procedure on p. 127. James K. Bruckner, *Implied Law in the Abraham Narrative: A Literary and Theological Analysis*, JSOTSup 335 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 124-70.

[29] Blenkinsopp, 125; Bruckner, 143; Lytton: 36; von Rad, *Genesis*, 179 (ET, 206); Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 353 (ET, 290).

[30] In the Pentateuch see Gen. 4:10; 27:34; Exod 2:23; 3:7, 9; 5: 8, 15; 22:22, 27; Num. 20:16; Deut. 26:7; the word is also used extensively in the prophetic literature.

[31] Alter, *Genesis*, 80; Amos, 105; Davidson, 68; Fretheim, "Genesis," 468; Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 20-21; Letellier, 119; von Rad, *Genesis*, 179 (ET, 206); Sarna, 145.

situation. Later in 19:13 the great outcry is confirmed twice as the reason for Sodom's destruction. Ch. 19 will flesh out the picture of the vice in Sodom, but in ch. 18 the text already sets up the expectation that Sodom's sin relates to oppression of the vulnerable. In dramatic contrast to Sodom's oppression of its victims is Yahweh's receptivity to their cry. While the legal sections of the Pentateuch will explicitly teach that the God of Israel is the champion of the vulnerable, the story of Sodom depicts this hospitality of God, this attention to the cry of the needy, in vivid narrative.

The outcry caused by Sodom's oppression, צְעָקָה, is contrasted through word play in this passage with צְדָקָה, righteousness.[32] God has described Abraham as a teacher of צְדָקָה in 18:19, and the narrative has painted a detailed portrait of his hospitality as an example story of his virtue. By contrast Sodom is characterized as a cause of צְעָקָה, and its inhospitality will be the theme of the chapter to follow. Righteousness and hospitality continue to interweave in ch. 18; their association will be more direct in ch. 19.

Justice also is linked with hospitality through the judicial proceedings of 18:20-33. God, as "the judge of all the earth" (18:25), exemplifies justice in his treatment of Sodom, for he surely "does what is just" (18:25). First we see God's receptivity to the cry of the oppressed, the צְעָקָה of Sodom. All are included in the administration of justice, for even the powerless are heard. Next we see God deciding to bring Abraham into the discussion of what will happen to Sodom, admitting him into the secrets of the divine council.[33] Abraham stands his ground before God (18:22),[34] expresses shock at the potential course of events (18:25, "Far be it!"), demands that God act justly (18:25, "Shall not the judge of the earth do what is just?"),[35] and persistently proposes smaller and smaller numbers for the group of

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[32] Gossai points out that the pun is highlighted more clearly in Isa. 5:7:
    [Yahweh] expected justice (מִשְׁפָּט),
    but saw bloodshed (מִשְׂפָּח);
    righteousness (צְדָקָה),
    but heard a cry (צְעָקָה).
Gossai, 90. See also Amos, 105.

[33] Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 69.

[34] Tradition holds that in the original text, God stood before Abraham, whose apparent upper hand in such a scenario occasioned enough dismay to occasion a scribal emendation. Hamilton provides bibliographical references for the text critical discussion. Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 23 n. 24.

[35] T.J. Mafico argues that Abraham in this dialogue is not actually pleading for Sodom, nor for Lot, but wrestling with the question of the nature of God's justice. T.J. Mafico, "The Crucial Question Concerning the Justice of God (Gen. 18:23-26)," *JTSA*, no. 42 (1983): 15.

righteous people (צַדִּיקִם) who can avert Sodom's destruction (18:23-32). God allows Abraham to question the judicial process, to press his point repeatedly, and to win his case for a change in the criterion for judgment. Abraham insistently challenges God's justice, and his demand is received and considered, hospitably.

Two cries for justice come before God, and both are received. The process of justice itself exemplifies hospitality. J.K. Bruckner expresses this correlation strikingly:

> That God is the only legitimate self-authenticating judiciary and has the prerogative to act is widely assumed by interpreters. In this text, however, an argument of another kind is offered. The text offers a juridical response that invites human participation in the process. The text discloses the possibility of a legal process, involving humanity and God, by which questions of justice and injustice may be raised and adjudicated. This is the 'way' into which Abraham enters. He freely approaches, questions and influences God's procedure in adjudicating justice.[36]

The "way of Yahweh," the righteousness and justice which Abraham is to live and to pass on to his descendants, is the way of hospitality, of welcome to the outsider. Ch. 18 portrays this through the words and actions of both God, the establisher of the *ethnie*, and of Abraham, the elected father of the nation that is charged to follow the same ethic. Ch. 19 presents the antithesis to this ethic. The townsmen's attitude to right and wrong and their procedures of justice are both crystallized in their treatment of Lot, the sojourner in their midst. We turn now to the analysis of 19:9, where these intertwined themes are all brought to a head.

C. The Sojourner in Sodom

The scene in the city of Sodom is rich in narrative artistry, providing much material for extensive analysis. Here the discussion will concentrate on issues of justice, good/bad distinctions, and the interaction of individual and corporate identities across boundaries in acts of inclusion or exclusion. These themes have been set in motion by the preceding narrative, as discussed above, and come into sharp focus with the sojourn reference in 19:9. The analysis following will move through the narrative verse by verse, beginning in 19:1.

The scene begins at the city gate, where Lot is seated when the messengers arrive (19:1). Immediately questions of justice and the community are suggested.

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[36] Bruckner, 156-57.

Many commentators interpret Lot's location at the gate as indication of his accepted status in the community, for he is positioned at the place where communal justice is traditionally administered.[37] Von Rad says that "Lot is now a townsman,"[38] Westermann maintains that he "has become a citizen,"[39] S. Morschauser maintains he is on "guard duty" for the city,[40] and Rashi suggests he was appointed as a judge.[41] Wenham, however, raises a doubt: why are the elders of Sodom not mentioned as well? Is Lot in some way estranged from the community?[42] The omission is the first hint of something odd, a sense that all is not quite right. Ambiguity about Lot's relationship to the community will pervade the entirety of the remaining chapter.

Vs. 2-3 detail Lot's hospitality to the messengers, and the parallels here with Abraham's hospitality in ch. 18 trigger disagreement over the comparative narrative appraisal of the two characters.[43] For the purposes of this discussion, the detailed study of Lot as an individual character is not of central importance. In this reading, which focuses on the dimension of ethnic identity in texts referencing sojourn, the figure of Lot can be seen to fulfill two functions. First, Lot functions as a bridge connecting the story of Abraham, Israel's divinely elected ancestor, with Sodom, the community that God judges and destroys. While the narrative makes skillful use of characterization and plot detail in developing Lot's involvement with Sodom, in the larger drama comparing two ethnic communities Lot is in fact only a placeholder.[44]

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[37] Cf. Gen. 23:10, 18; 34:20, 24. Alter, *Genesis*, 84; Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 32; Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1967), 134; Letellier, 140; Scullion, 159-60; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 54.

[38] He also observes that Lot owns property in Sodom and is related to the native population by marriage; von Rad, *Genesis*, 185 (ET, 212).

[39] Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 367 (ET, 301).

[40] Scott Morschauser, "'Hospitality', Hostiles and Hostages: On the Legal Background to Genesis 19.1-9," *JSOT* 27, no. 4 (2003): 467.

[41] Rashi, 77.

[42] Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 54. Bechtel and Letellier interpret Lot's position at the edge or boundary of the city as signaling marginal status with regard to the community. Bechtel, 26; Letellier, 140.

[43] See discussion above for references.

[44] My description of Lot as a placeholder is not the same as Coats's suggestion that Lot is a passive character who acts as a foil to the active, heroic Abraham. I am not arguing that the dominant characteristic of Lot's character is passivity. Rather, I propose that the narrative's primary concern is a comparison between Abraham and Sodom, and that in this comparison Lot's role is secondary, adding no unique contribution of content to the primary comparison. In the structure of the plot Lot provides a reproduction of Abraham's hospitality, transferred to a location where it contrasts directly with the inhospitality of Sodom, but his own hospitality does not shine in its own right. See George W. Coats, "Lot: A Foil in the Abraham Saga," in *Understanding the Word: Essays in Honor of Bernhard W. Anderson*, ed. James T. Butler, Edgar W. Conrad, and Ben C. Ollenburger, JSOTSup 37 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), 121; Coats, *Genesis*, 114-15, 147.

The details of his character and story, as will be shown further in the discussion below, primarily serve to reflect on Sodom as a community and the vice it displays, which in turn highlights the portrait of Israel's ancestor and the virtue he is charged to pass on to his ethnic community. If Lot's hospitality resembles Abraham's, then, it is not as a competitor but as a copy, situated as it is in the context of Sodom in order to facilitate the truly forceful comparison of the narrative, which is between Abraham and Sodom.

Lot's second function is similar to those of Ishmael and Esau, two characters who are portrayed with complexity, ambiguity, and some sympathy, but who ultimately pass off the stage, the final mark of their passing a genealogical note about the ethnic communities they father (see Gen. 19:37-38; 25:12-18; 36:1-19). These three characters are the dis-elect,[45] the shadowy counterparts to the ancestors of Israel in each generation of the patriarchs. In each of their stories, questions can be raised as to whether ethical performance relates to their dis-election, and hence an evaluation of Lot's hospitality in Gen. 19 may be relevant for reflection on this question. An evaluation of Lot's hospitality, and particularly his offer of his daughters, would thus have a place in the larger narrative progression of Lot's questionable choices and their impact on his final fate.[46] Ultimately, however, a certain ambiguity in the Genesis narratives resists clear ethical categorization of the dis-elect. While the narratives communicate fairly strong appraisals of Israel's ancestors on the one hand, and of the "native" populations on the other, the ethnic communities related to Israel by these stories of family ties seem to persistently defy classification. As it is for Moab and Ammon, then, so it is for Lot: some narrative attention is given to a complex and uncertain relationship vis-à-vis Israel,[47] but ultimately it is the ideological polarity between Israel and the "native" ethnic communities that drives the plot. Here in Genesis 19, then, we turn with the narrative

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[45] I borrow this term from Heard, who coins the neologism to express the negative side of election. Heard, 3 n. 3.

[46] Appraisals of Lot's character in the Genesis narratives range across a spectrum. The extremes of positive and negative estimations are represented, respectively, by T.D. Alexander and S.P. Jeansonne; Jeansonne gives a synopsis of evaluations of Lot by others as well. Alexander, "Lot's Hospitality," 289-91; Jeansonne: 123-29.

[47] While Moab and Ammon were historic antagonists to Israel, the depiction of their origins in 19:30-38 is ambiguous, and has been variously interpreted as either positive or negative rhetoric about the two nations. For discussions see Amos, 111; Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 176-77; Coats, *Genesis*, 115, 148; Fields, 146; Heard, 60-61; Gunkel, *Genesis*, 217-18 (ET, 216-17); Janzen, *Abraham*, 66-67; von Rad, *Genesis*, 190-92 (ET, 218-20); Skinner, 314; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 60; Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 380-85 (ET, 312-15).

from its brief depiction of Lot's meal to the building drama of the story: the men of Sodom outside the door.

V. 4 reports that the men of Sodom encircle Lot's house. The description reiterates a quadruple emphasis on the comprehensiveness of the crowd: they are the men of the city (אַנְשֵׁי הָעִיר), the men of Sodom (אַנְשֵׁי סְדֹם),[48] from young to old (מִנַּעַר וְעַד־זָקֵן), all the people (כָּל־הָעָם), to the last man (מִקָּצֶה).[49] The accent on totality here is usually interpreted as an answer to the inquiry in 18:16-33 about the extent of Sodom's sin—whether it is "altogether," כָּלָה (18:21), and how many righteous individuals might be found among the wicked majority (18:23-32).[50] This verse thus demonstrates unmistakably that there were not, in fact, even ten righteous men in Sodom.[51] Yet it is also possible to discern an additional emphasis in this description, that of unanimity of opinion.[52] The all-inclusiveness of the group means that there are no objectors or dissenters, and no alternatives to the collective agenda. This throws Lot's opposition to their wish into sharp relief, and highlights their rejection of his protest as not only a favoring of vice over virtue, but also an insistence upon the dominance of the collective will over the individual opinion. The visual image of the group encircling the home adds to a sense that the power of numbers will be brought against Lot's lone resistance, the many overpowering the one.[53]

In v. 5 the men of Sodom make their demand that Lot bring his guests outside so they may "know them," וְנֵדְעָה אֹתָם. While alternative interpretations have been proposed,[54] the consensus opinion is that the intent of the townsmen is homosexual

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[48] The repetition here has been seen as evidence of a gloss. See Bruckner, 134; Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 367 (ET, 301). Morschauser, however, finds further legal terminology here, writing, "On the surface, the epithet 'men of' would seem to be a nondescript term for 'inhabitants'. However, in the ancient Near East, 'men of (Geographical Name)' also had juridical dimensions, and was used as a technical reference to 'citizens': those who were holders of a particular civic-status and authority within the body-politic." This usage would accord with the narrative's developing theme of participation in juridical process. Morschauser: 467.

[49] Westermann defends this translation of מִקָּצֶה against the alternative "from the farthest limit [of the city]." Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 367 (ET, 301).

[50] Janzen, *Abraham*, 61; Loader, 37; Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 367 (ET, 301).

[51] Turner, *Genesis*, 87; Sarna, 148; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 63.

[52] Letellier writes, "the townsmen appear to act with a corporate intention." Gossai also observes, "…the unity of the city and the uniformity of purpose is succinctly captured in v. 4. All the men are of one mind…" Letellier, 145; Gossai, 87.

[53] Letellier notes that "surrounding" gives the sense of encircling with evil intent, and Fields notes semantic overlap with "besieging." Speiser also captures a hostile undertone with his translation, "closed in on the house." Letellier, 145; Fields, 75; Speiser, *Genesis*, 139.

[54] Brian Doyle, "The Sin of Sodom : yāda', yāda', yāda'? A Reading of the Mamre-Sodom Narrative in Genesis 18-19," *Theology & Sexuality*, no. 9 (1998): 91; Morschauser: 472.

rape. The prevailing view also holds that the primary focus of the narrative is not on the sexual aspect of their demand, but rather its violation of hospitality.[55] Rape is symbolic of aggressive inhospitality,[56] and as such is used here to exemplify the extremes of Sodom's maltreatment of guests.[57] The request is prefaced by the demand that Lot "bring the men out to us," removing them from the protection of Lot's house and handing them over to the control of the townsmen.[58] Heard argues that their goal is not so much sexual pleasure as a forcible demonstration of their dominance and control over the defenseless guests.[59] Gossai writes, "The focus of this narrative is on domination and humiliation; of crushing others who might be perceived to be different and weak."[60] In Bechtel's analysis of boundary issues in this episode, she describes rape as a forceful, non-consensual boundary violation, threatened by the townsmen in response to the boundary violation of the guests entering their city.[61] The door to the house as the boundary within which the guests are protected provides a striking visual image of the conflict. Lot's hospitality establishes a boundary that shields his guests against hostility; once outside the door, however, the visitors would be unprotected and vulnerable to violent penetration, both physically and symbolically. The threat of rape in this passage, then, is not so much a personal sexual crime as a corporate manifestation of social violence against vulnerable individual elements.[62]

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[55] Amos, 108; Coats, *Genesis*, 143; Fretheim, "Genesis," 474, 477; Fields, 41; Gossai, 83; Letellier, 158; Loader, 37; Vawter, 235; Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 368 (ET, 301).

[56] Janzen contrasts rape with hospitality, writing, "…rape desecrates the sanctity of human sexual relations. The sanctity of these relations consists in the mutuality of consent—the mutuality of entrusting one's body vulnerably to the other and offering tender hospitality to the body of the other." Janzen, *Abraham*, 62.

[57] S. Niditch compares the threat of homosexual rape in Gen. 19 with Homer's use of cannibalism in the Cyclopes and Laestrygones incidents of the *Odyssey*. In both stories, travelers needing succor are met instead with hostile behavior that "epitomizes anti-social interaction in each culture." Susan Niditch, "The 'Sodomite' Theme in Judges 19-20: Family, Community, and Social Disintegration," *CBQ* 44 (1982): 369.

[58] Lings, 184.

[59] Heard, 52.

[60] Gossai, 83.

[61] Bechtel, 28-29.

[62] Biblical traditions about Sodom and Gomorrah outside of the Genesis texts echo an emphasis on social injustice. Loader provides a comprehensive analysis of these traditions; Fields looks in particular at texts that share plot motifs with the Genesis narrative. Loader, 49-74; Fields, 155-84. See also Alter, "Sodom," 157; Amos, 108-09; Gunkel, *Genesis*, 216-17 (ET, 215); Loader, 43; Miller, 556; von Rad, *Genesis*, 185 (ET, 213); Speiser, *Genesis*, 142; Vawter, 233; Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 363-64 (ET, 289-99).

Lot's counter-plea in vv. 6-8 heightens the drama of good and evil, corporate and individual. First he goes outside and shuts the door behind him (v. 6), putting himself between the threatening crowd and the endangered guests, and also placing himself outside the safe boundary of his own home. His self-sacrificing mediation on behalf of his guests represents the high point of his hospitality, and echoes Abraham's intercession on behalf of others in ch. 18.[63] Next (v. 7) Lot addresses the men of Sodom as "my brothers," אַחַי, prefaced with a polite "please," נָא.[64] His address to the townsmen as brothers has been variously interpreted as courtesy,[65] an appeal to responsibility,[66] a reminder of common humanity,[67] or a juridical statement of legal equality.[68] All these meanings are perhaps implied. What the narrative makes most clear is the jarring contrast between Lot's address to the townspeople as *brothers*, and their response in v. 9 that he is a *sojourner*.[69] Their rebuff is in direct opposition to his plea. Lot's call for a bond with them denoting equality, respect, and a hearing of his voice is countered with a declaration of exclusion signifying his marginalization from the group and its process of decision. The townsmen as a group are unified and homogenous. Lot's divergent voice appeals to brotherhood before presenting his opposing opinion, but the divergent viewpoint will not be tolerated, and so the bond he appeals to is vehemently denied.

In v. 7 Lot also begs the men of Sodom not to "act wickedly," תָּרֵעוּ. Here he begins to discern between good and bad,[70] and issues a judgment.[71] In v. 9 the townsmen will reject not only his conclusion, but more fundamentally, the validity of his participation in the process of discerning good and bad: "this fellow…is playing judge!" Their response in v. 9 thus stands in counterpoint to v. 7, picking up both the elements of communal status ("brothers"/"sojourner") and the process of judging ("act wickedly"/"playing judge"). Between the two verses stands v. 8, where Lot offers his daughters to the mob instead of his guests. The mob makes no direct response to this offer. The verse is not unrelated, however, to issues of sojourn.

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[63] Letellier, 148.

[64] Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 56.

[65] Letellier, 148.

[66] Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 368 (ET, 301).

[67] Amos, 108-09; Janzen, *Abraham*, 63.

[68] Heard, 54; Morschauser: 473 n. 43; von Rad, *Genesis*, 186 (ET, 213); Scullion, 159.

[69] Alter, *Genesis*, 85; Heard, 54; Janzen, *Abraham*, 63; Miller, 556.

[70] Bechtel, 30.

[71] Bruckner speaks of an "implied ought" in Lot's words here. Bruckner, 137-38.

While a thorough analysis of Lot's offer of his daughters is beyond the scope of this study, it is worthwhile to note here its similarity to the wife-sister tales in Gen. 12, 20 and 26. In all four stories, a man explicitly designated as a *sojourner*[72] makes a female or females in his household sexually available to the natives in exchange for the safety of males in the household (or in Lot's case, males who have come under the protection of the household).[73] In the case of the wife-sister tales, the benefit of safety is augmented by a second gain of wealth[74] and in some cases, rights of settlement in the land.[75] A less direct parallel may also be noted in Gen. 34; here there is no direct mention of sojourn, but the availability of Dinah (as well as other "daughters," vv. 9, 16, 21) for marriage is presented as an opportunity for Jacob's family to gain rights of settlement in the land and prospects of prosperity through trade (34:8-10, 21). Safety is not a benefit explicitly offered at the start of the narrative, but Jacob's fear at the end of the story brings the issue in (34:30). The outcome is quite different in each story, although there are closer similarities between the three wife-sister tales. The central similarity, however, lies in the vulnerability of the sojourner (whether real or perceived), and the venture to reduce the hostility of the natives toward the strangers in their midst by allowing sexual relations with females from the sojourner's household.[76]

The literature interpreting the Shechem narrative and the wife-sister tales is vast,[77] and a comprehensive argument about the value judgments implied in these stories cannot be sufficiently defended within the parameters of this project. It is

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[72] Gen. 12:10; 20:1; 26:3; 19:9.

[73] Gen 12:13 "so that my life may be spared;" 20:11 "they will kill me because of my wife;" 26:7 "the men of the place might kill me for the sake of Rebekah," 19:8 "do to them as you please, only do nothing to these men."

[74] 12:16; 20:14, 16; 26:13-14.

[75] 20:15; 26:12.

[76] T. Gur-Klein and J. Pitt-Rivers find anthropological evidence for a similar pattern of events in which sexual access to the women of a guest or wandering family is offered in exchange for security of reception and the granting of land use rights from a sedentary population. Thalia Gur-Klein, "Sexual Hospitality in the Hebrew Bible: Patriarchal Lineage or Matriarchal Rebellion?," in *Patriarchs, Prophets, and Other Villains*, ed. Lisa Isherwood, Gender, Theology and Spirituality (London: Equinox, 2007), 159-60, 175; Julian Pitt-Rivers, *The Fate of Shechem or The Politics of Sex: Essays in the Anthropology of the Mediterranean*, ed. Jack Goody, Cambridge Studies in Social Anthropology 19 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 159-61.

[77] More recent studies include bibliographies of the discussions to date. See for example Susan Niditch, *A Prelude to Biblical Folklore: Underdogs and Tricksters* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 23-69; Frank M. Yamada, "Dealing with Rape (in) Narrative (Genesis 34): Ethics of the Other and a Text in Conflict," in *The Meanings We Choose: Hermeneutical Ethics, Indeterminacy and the Conflict of Interpretations*, ed. Charles H. Cosgrove, JSOTSup 411 (London: T. & T. Clark International, 2004), 149-65.

sufficient to note at this point that 19:8 makes a contribution to the development of sojourn themes that resonate throughout the patriarchal narratives. Lot's offer echoes those of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in their negotiations as sojourners for safety and a foothold in the land. The men of Sodom, however, are the only native population of the five stories who reject the offer of the sojourner out of hand, adding to their response an explicit threat of harm and an actual physical assault. Unlike the native hosts portrayed in the four stories above, the inhabitants of Sodom are painted with no sympathetic touches whatsoever.[78] The ambiguity characterizing the stance of the hosts in the other four stories contrasts with the clear vice of the inhabitants of Sodom, who breach the boundaries of negotiations, property, and person in a hostile attack on the sojourner in their midst.

Lot's offer of his daughters includes the phrase, "Do to them what is good in your eyes" (19:8), כַּטּוֹב בְּעֵינֵיכֶם, meaning "as you please," or "as you see fit."[79] According to Bruckner the expression is a juridical indication of decision-making power, indicating that Lot is making "a concession to the self-authenticating rule of the men of Sodom."[80] Lot concedes to them the authority of discerning and deciding what is "good," טוֹב, and gives them full reign to act on their decision. This stands in contrast to v. 7 where Lot pronounced that they were acting wickedly, רָעַע, and tried persuading them to refrain. It seems that Lot is now attempting to give the men of Sodom what they want: the power to make value judgments as a group and act with impunity on their self-authenticating decision. Lot is giving them this power in a different domain than they initially demanded, however—that of his daughters rather than that of his guests. He also gives them this freedom only after initially repudiating it with his statement in v. 7. The final words of Lot's speech echo his opening words, urging the townsmen not to do anything to his guests, and invoking the "ought" of hospitality again by stating that the men have come under his roof in

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[78] Several scholars observe sympathetic portrayals of the hosts in the wife-sister tales. For examples, see Albertz, *Exilszeit*, 205 (ET, 264-65); Alter, "Sodom," 155-56; Coats, *Genesis*, 150; Peter D. Miscall, "Literary Unity in Old Testament Narrative," *Semeia* 15 (1979): 32; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 291-92; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 72.
For an argument that Shechem is portrayed with sympathy in Gen. 34, see Danna Nolan Fewell and David M. Gunn, "Tipping the Balance: Sternberg's Reader and the Rape of Dinah," *JBL* 110, no. 2 (1991): 196-97, 200-01.
[79] Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 35.
[80] Bruckner, 138. Amos also notes the resonance of this statement with the expression "everyone did what was right in his own eyes," used elsewhere in the Hebrew bible to describe "a situation of unbridled anarchy and violence, characteristic of times and places where relationships between human beings have broken down." Amos, 108.

order to find protection (v. 8).[81] It is not surprising, given the focus of the confrontation on the issue of decision-making power, that Lot's offer of his daughters does not appease the crowd. In fact, his renunciation of their authority seems to be all they hear in his speech, and it is this that they respond to in the climactic statement of v. 9.

The first utterance of the mob in v. 9 is an order to Lot, "Get away!"[82] The spatial image here expresses relationship to the community, as is the case throughout the narrative. The mob rebuffs Lot's expression of closeness, "my brothers," warning him that in relation to their group he is both physically and metaphorically too close. With these words they also command Lot to remove himself from his position of mediation between the townsmen and his guests. His removal would leave the door of his house unguarded and the boundary open, allowing the hostile group to enter and engulf the protective, private space.

The townsmen speak again, this time to one another. Their indirect reference to Lot in the third person emphasizes his exclusion from the group and from its process of interaction and decision.[83] They interject, "This one came as a sojourner,[84] and he is playing the judge!" Then they turn on Lot again and threaten, "Now we will treat you worse than them!" The two second-person addresses bracket the central statement which they make to one another, speaking about Lot but not to him. This central statement contains the principal opposition of the story, that between "sojourner" and "judge." The men of Sodom imply that for a *sojourner* to *judge* is, at the very least, inappropriate, and at the most incongruous, absurd, or nonsensical. The tone of their statement has been interpreted as contemptuous,[85] mocking,[86] or incredulous,[87] but in all cases, the clear message is that the judgment of a sojourner is not accepted by this group.

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[81] Bruckner, 137.

[82] The phrase is a unique occurrence in the HB and is challenging to interpret. Fields notes, "לגשת is usually used in the sense of 'approach'. However, in conjunction with הלאה, which always refers to a distance farther removed (Num. 17.2; 1 Sam. 20.22), the expression means 'get away!'" Hamilton also argues that the use of the adverb allows a translation suggesting distance. The phrase has been variously translated as "come on," "come here," "present yourself," "move away," "make room," and "stand back." Fields, 78; Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 29 n. 9; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 35; Heard, 55; Bechtel, 33; Delitzsch, *Neuer*, 305 (ET, 53); Dillmann, *Die Genesis*, 254 (ET, 103); Bruckner, 134.

[83] Bruckner, 135.

[84] Or "came to sojourn."

[85] Letellier, 151; Rashi, 78.

[86] Alter, "Sodom," 150; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 56.

[87] Gunkel and Skinner interpret the use of the imperfect consecutive וַיִּשְׁפֹּט as expressing paradoxical consequence. Gunkel, *Genesis*, 209 (ET, 208); Skinner, 307 n. 4.

The designation of Lot as a sojourner is prefaced by the label "this one," הָאֶחָד. A variety of translations bring out the signification of this word: "a single immigrant," [88] "that one there," [89] and "this solitary individual." [90] The word emphasizes Lot's solitary position over against the unanimous group that acts of one accord. The subsequent phrase "came as a sojourner," בָּא־לָגוּר, drives home the point: Lot is an outsider to Sodom and its inhabitants. Next comes the accusatory phrase וַיִּשְׁפֹּט שָׁפוֹט, with the infinitive absolute usually translated as emphatic or intensive, expressing a sense of impertinent presumption ("playing judge,"[91] "tries to be a judge,"[92] "presumes to judge, yes, to judge"[93]).[94]

Two aspects of this contrast between sojourning and judging are significant here. First, the men of Sodom communicate with their statement that it is inappropriate for a sojourner to take a role in the communal process of judgment. There are varying interpretations of what exactly this process of judgment is. Von Rad points in particular to Lot's function as arbitrator, mediating the confrontation between the townsmen and his guests.[95] Speiser prefers a broader interpretation focusing on the general exercise of authority, arguing that the legal connotations of the scene are incidental and the best translation is "to act the master."[96] Bruckner, however, makes the case for more explicit juridical signification, writing,

> 'Play the judge' is a unique phrase in the Hebrew Bible. This challenge to Lot is in the manner of *Quo Warranto* (What warrant?), a legal procedure in which a person is called to show by what authority he claims an office of privilege. Ought Lot or ought Lot not play the judge? Lot has no warrant to judge them, in their opinion, since he is an alien. … It is their community. They are unanimous in their values and behavior. Their authority is self-authenticating.[97]

The clearest indication of what judgment means in the narrative comes from Lot's statement that the men of Sodom are acting wickedly, v. 7. Lot here makes a moral judgment about the actions of the group, discerning what is good and bad for the

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[88] Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 35.
[89] Gunkel, *Genesis*, 209 (ET, 208).
[90] Janzen, *Abraham*, 63.
[91] Bruckner, 134; Dillmann, *Die Genesis*, 254 (ET, 103); Janzen, *Abraham*, 63; Letellier, 151.
[92] Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 35.
[93] Alter, "Sodom," 150.
[94] Less commonly the infinitive absolute may be translated as repetitive, expressing continual action: "keeps on judging," or "sits in judgment." Heard, 55; Lytton: 50.
[95] See von Rad, *Genesis*, 186 (ET, 213).
[96] Speiser, *Genesis*, 134, 136.
[97] Bruckner, 135.

community.[98] In v. 9, the community tells him that he may not do such a thing. The group of townsmen determines its own moral evaluation of its course of action (a course that will bring harm to two vulnerable individuals), and will brook no scruples from a lone individual. When the individual objects, he is reminded that he is only one, and that he does not belong to the group. The label "sojourner" thus serves as shorthand for their forceful exclusion of a conscientious objector who speaks up for what he believes is right.

Second, the content of Lot's judgment is itself objectionable to the men of Sodom. Lot has proclaimed an ethical imperative: "Lot's speech raises the ought of hospitality as a warrant for the protection of strangers. Lot clearly thinks that the 'shelter of his roof'…is sufficient grounds for the protection of the messengers. He considers the failure to honor this protection 'wicked'…"[99] In vv. 7-8 Lot claims that protecting vulnerable outsiders is a moral good, and condemns the townsmen's intent to harm them as evil. The men of Sodom, however, reject this judgment of Lot's. Furthermore, they round on him and proclaim him a sojourner, and thus a vulnerable outsider himself. They then assert that they will do *more evil* to him (v. 9) than to the guests Lot had tried to protect. Thus Lot's moral charge to protect visitors is rejected, and further, the evil intent of the townsmen broadens to include the sojourner as well as the visitors. They insist on their moral option[100]: they are free to do what is wrong, and to prove it, will do *more wrong*.

Thus Lot's "judgment" is rejected on two levels. First, he is excluded from the decision making of the community. His label as sojourner ejects him from the communal procedures of discerning good and bad. The outsider's voice is not welcome in the univocal declarations of the men of Sodom. Second, his evaluation of inhospitality as wicked is rejected. The community affirms that it can and will do harm to vulnerable outsiders. Lot's label as sojourner puts him in the circle of those under threat; more evil will befall him, they threaten, than was originally intended for the visitors. The fact of Lot's judging and the content of Lot's judging are both decisively renounced. As Westermann succinctly puts it, "those who use force not only do what they want, but also want to be in the right."[101] The men of Sodom declare that Lot is a sojourner. This means that his voice is not included in group

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[98] Bechtel, 24-25.
[99] Bruckner, 137.
[100] Letellier, 151.
[101] Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 368 (ET, 302).

discernment of good and evil, but also that his very existence is under threat of extinction by the evil he sought to name and resist. In Sodom, then, the sojourner is not only excluded but extinguished.

The remainder of v. 9 shows the men of Sodom executing their self-appointed right to eradicate the resistance of a sojourner. They press hard against Lot, called "the man Lot" to emphasize his solitariness once again, and come near to breaking down the door, the fragile boundary of hospitality. The turn in the plot comes immediately. The unnamed, vulnerable visitors turn out to have divine powers: they pull Lot into the protective space of his home, transforming into his protectors after he sought to protect them (19:10); they strike the men of Sodom with blindness so they cannot find the boundary they sought to demolish (19:11); and they declare that they will destroy the city because of the outcry against its people (19:13). The verdict is clear. After all the haggling over who has the right to judge, the narrative affirms that it is God who has the ultimate power to judge good from bad. Most importantly, God's justice sides with the sojourner. God judges inhospitality to sojourners as wicked, and acts decisively to punish it. As the events of ch. 19 unfold, it is Sodom, and not the sojourner it tried to eliminate, that is entirely eradicated (19:25).

D. Abraham, Sodom, and Ethnic Establishment

The four primary figures in the Sodom narrative are God, Abraham, Lot, and the group comprised of the men of Sodom. Each of them acts along the twin axes of *justice* and *hospitality*, and the results of each of their actions play out in the dimension of *ethnic identity*. A review of these three elements for each of the four characters serves as a synopsis for the discussion above.

Abraham is exemplary in his *hospitality*. The detailed story of his generosity to unknown, surprise guests (18:1-8) is the prototype for Lot's, which imitates but cannot surpass its original. Abraham's hospitality is offered as a cameo of his general *righteousness and justice*, which he is charged to teach to his descendants (18:19). Abraham's destiny as a teacher of justice is the stated reason God brings him into the deliberations of the divine council regarding the fate of Sodom (18:17-19). Abraham enters the deliberation process as a voice calling for justice (18:25). In his appeal he presses for the salvation of Sodom based on smaller and smaller numbers of righteous people in it (18:23-32). Here Abraham displays further qualities of

hospitality, pleading for the welfare of a city to which he does not belong.[102] He also urges the consideration of a small minority as influential for the fate of a large majority. Justice and hospitality intertwine in this narrative to inform and define one another.

Throughout the narrative there are numerous ways in which Abraham as an individual represents the *ethnic community*. He is affirmed as the father of an ethnic group, indeed a great and mighty nation (18:18). His role in relation to this *ethnie* is described as instructive; that is, his example of right behavior is held up as the moral pattern that his descendants are to follow. Abraham takes his role of community representation seriously, even taking up the cause of ethnic groups not his own in his dedication to justice. In addition, the logic of his argument itself, as Speiser notes, "seeks to establish for the meritorious individual the privilege of saving an otherwise worthless community."[103] The narrative points to the conclusion that his commitment to right behavior as an individual leads to the establishment of his ethnic community. First, God's speech affirms that righteous and just behavior on the part of Abraham and his descendants will lead to the fulfillment of the divine promises, the content of which is ethnic realization (18:19). Second, following upon his display of hospitality Abraham receives divine confirmation that he will have a child (18:10, 14), the son who signifies the fulfillment of the divine promises to establish Abraham as an *ethnie*. Finally, the narrative concludes that it is on account of Abraham that God rescues Lot from the destruction in Sodom (19:29).[104] While Lot will father other ethnic groups, they are still related (albeit less directly) to Abraham, and the text declares that they owe their survival to him. Not only will Abraham be a nation, but he will,

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[102] Many commentators underscore Abraham's selfless virtue in interceding on behalf of Sodom. A few scholars, however, view his advocacy as a more abstract defense of a theoretical point regarding the operation of justice. The latter interpretation, however, still affirms Abraham's commitment to the serious consideration of the righteousness of members of an alien community, albeit less powerfully than the interpretation of his advocacy as actual solidarity with the people of Sodom. For the interpretation of Abraham's advocacy as a plea on behalf of Sodom, see Delitzsch, *Neuer*, 302-03 (ET, 50); Dillmann, *Die Genesis*, 251 (ET, 97); Driver, *Genesis*, 196; Fretheim, "Genesis," 476; Gossai, 55; Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 17-19; Kidner, 131, 133; Letellier, 136, 219; Sarna, 143; Scullion, 156; Vawter, 231; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 63. For the interpretation of Abraham's advocacy as a more theoretical debate over justice see Coats, *Genesis*, 130 n. 20; Gunkel, *Genesis*, 205 (ET, 204); Mafico: 15; von Rad, *Genesis*, 180 (ET, 207); Skinner, 305; Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 354-57 (ET, 291-93).

[103] Speiser, *Genesis*, 135. For similar statements see Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 173; von Rad, *Genesis*, 180-82 (ET, 207-09); Sarna, 150; Van Seters, *Abraham*, 214-15.

[104] This verse is generally seen as representing the Priestly perspective. Davidson, 75; Driver, *Genesis*, 191, 202; Gunkel, *Genesis*, 261-63 (ET, 257-59); Loader, 44; von Rad, *Genesis*, 189 (ET, 217); Skinner, 310; Speiser, *Genesis*, 143; Vawter, 239; Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 376 (ET, 308).

according to the promises, be a nation so successful that he is a blessing to other nations (18:18). Abraham thus functions as a positive example of the three-part message of the text: (1) justice and righteousness mean hospitality, (2) those who practice hospitality are individuals in right relationship to community, and (3) God establishes the ethnic community of those who act in such ways.[105]

Sodom functions as a cipher for all that is opposite to Abraham/Israel in this narrative.[106] Its *inhospitality* is pictured in its townsmen's threat of rape to its visitors, an act symbolizing the extreme anti-pole to hospitable reception of the outsider. Their inhospitality is notched up another level when they threaten worse treatment to Lot, an individual who is not even a complete outsider but a sojourner with a home in the city. Their attempt to physically overpower Lot and break through his door epitomizes a determination to crush the being and voice of the sojourner before the will and power of the group. Issues of *justice* highlight the inhospitality of Sodom. The townsmen act as a univocal group, declaring their moral option and rejecting the alternative judgment of the sojourner. Moreover, the men of Sodom insist that the sojourner has no right of protection; in their ethical world the only "right" is that of the group. The process by which Sodom judges silences the voice of the individual and shuts the outsider out of the community. Ultimately, Sodom's rejection of hospitality as the way of justice leads to its extinction as an *ethnic community*. Sodom has no survivors, no descendants, and no future. The God who establishes Abraham's ethnic future cuts off that of Sodom. Sodom thus functions as a thoroughly negative example of the text's message. It denies hospitality as the way of justice, extinguishes the voice of individuals in the group, and calls forth God's complete destruction of Sodom as a community.

Lot plays an uncertain role as a figure a few steps removed from the strong figure of Abraham. His *hospitality* is virtuous to the extent that it replicates Abraham's, as he welcomes the guests and performs an unselfish act of intercession (19:1-7). His offer of his daughters (19:8) is not affirmed by the narrative as virtuous,

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[105] Alter analyzes Gen. 17-21 and makes a similar argument that propagation in these stories is conditional upon moral behavior. He notes that Isaac's birth is announced to his father in ch. 17 and to his mother in ch.18, but that before the birth itself in ch. 21, the intervening episodes and their ethical questions are closely related to the issue of birth. Alter's analysis, however, does not look closely at sojourn or at the connection of hospitality with justice. See Alter, "Sodom," 149.

[106] Alter aptly notes, "As to the larger unfolding design of biblical literature, Sodom…becomes the great monitory model, the myth of a terrible collective destiny antithetical to Israel's. The biblical writers will rarely lose sight of the ghastly possibility that Israel can turn itself into Sodom." Ibid., 157.

however, and is difficult to categorize as anything but deeply ambiguous. He boldly makes a moral *judgment,* declaring Sodom's inhospitality wicked (19:7), but muddies the waters with an immediate concession to the townsmen's moral judgment, urging them "do what is good in your eyes" (19:8). His position in relation to *community* is likewise indeterminate. He courageously attempts to mediate the intensifying conflict and to defend the rights of his vulnerable guests, but his appeal to a bond of brotherhood is rejected and his mediation proves unsuccessful. Ultimately it is others who will have to stand for him, as his guests become his protectors and rescuers (19:10-11, 15-16), and Abraham's virtue is cited as the reason for his salvation (19:29).[107] At the end of the day Lot fathers two nations (19:37-38), but the initiative of his daughters in making this happen (19: 31-38) stands in stark contrast with the divine initiative characterizing the births of the elected line of Abraham (21:2-3; 25:21; 29:31; 30:22). Lot has an ethnic future, but not as the elect of God. Lot's shadowy figure confirms the message of the text primarily by highlighting the chiaroscuro of Abraham and Sodom, the twin pictures of ethnic establishment and ethnic extinction.

Through it all, the figure of *God* functions as the anchor for the values expressed in the narrative. God is *the judge* of all the earth (18:25); he delivers the ultimate evaluation of good and bad that affirms the virtuous hospitality of Abraham and renounces the wicked inhospitality of Sodom. God's justice is in itself *hospitable,* first, because it is open to active participation from outsiders (both the vulnerable oppressed who cry out and the bold questioner who challenges the judge), and second, because it affirms the welcome of the sojourner as action that is "right." In both form and content the justice of God is hospitable, just as the justice of Sodom was inhospitable in both form and content. As judge of what is right, God ensures the continuity of the right way by establishing the ethnic future of those who practice an ethic of hospitality. God is the divine guarantor of *ethnic identity*. God elects Abraham in order to live ethically and pass on his ethics to his ethnic community (19:19). God also confirms the communal ethic by granting the hospitable individual an ethnic future, enlarging Abraham's identity from a single, childless figure to the

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[107] Lot's relationship to Zoar (as a community and a location) is likewise indistinct. He chooses it as his desired destination and place of establishment, and on his account it is not overthrown (19:21). Yet for unnamed reasons he is afraid to stay there, and leaves it to live in a cave (19:30). His ambivalence toward the city reinforces an overall sense of confusion in his identification as an individual with the communities he inhabits.

father of a nation. Sodom, however, the group that would not hear the voice of an individual sojourner, God reduces from a city filled with people to a wasteland.

Sojourn in this text functions in a new way compared to its use in the promises and the itinerary notices. First, it is not primarily concerned with relationship to land. Lot's categorization as a sojourner by the men of Sodom may derive from his origin outside the city, but his designation as a non-native is here primarily focused on the social results of the separation: his exclusion from communal processes of moral judgment, and the consequences for the community who rejects him. Sojourn here is a prism refracting several issues of communal interaction. Its use in this text contributes a new dimension to the discussion of ethics that began in the analysis of Gen. 26:3. There sojourn was put forward as a proposed way of life for the people of Israel, a category of identity that expressed not just their past origin myth but also a continuing dimension of their present self-understanding. Here, what a life of sojourn looks like takes on more concrete social detail.

This brings us to the second novel dimension of sojourn in this text. While the texts analyzed thus far have utilized sojourn as a description pertaining to Israel itself (via its ancestors), here it is not primarily Israel that is the sojourner. Lot, the sojourner in this text, is related to Abraham but not a part of his ethnic future. His role as a sojourner in the story focuses the stark comparison between Abraham and Sodom in their roles as *hosts*, demonstrating the basic message that the ethnic future of Israel depends upon its commitment to hospitality. The point here is that Israel is to receive the sojourner, in a way that Sodom did not. The ethical imperative of hospitality to the sojourner relates closely to the strong theme of justice to the גֵּר in the law codes of the Pentateuch. Here the primary concern is Israel's responsibility as *host* to the other who sojourns in its midst.

The motive clauses of these laws about the sojourner, however, repeatedly make a striking connection between Israel's reception of the sojourner and Israel's own identity as sojourners.[108] The connection made explicit in these motive clauses is subtly suggested in the Sodom narrative as well. Lot's own hospitality to his guests, reaching its high-water mark in 19:6-7, comes from a man who is himself vulnerable, isolated, and as becomes clear in 19:9, a confirmed sojourner. Abraham's hospitality

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[108] Ex. 22:21; 23:9; Deut. 10:19; 23:7; Lev. 19:34; 25:23. Miller comments, "Israel's way of dealing with the aliens resident in their midst is given *an empathetic moral incentive out of their own past and present experience as strangers and sojourners."* Emphasis original. Miller, 567.

in ch. 18, clearly depicted as exemplary, comes between explicit reminders of his sojourn status in 17:7 and 20:1, with multiple references to his tent dwelling throughout the chapter (18: 1, 2, 6, 9, 10) adding visual images of his transience.[109] The story dramatizes the irony that secure, native members of a cohesive community are far less welcoming to outsiders than two solitary men who are themselves sojourners.[110] Ultimately the text offers two levels of commentary on sojourn as Israel's identity. First, welcome to the sojourner is the ethic held up before Israel as the way to an established ethnic future. Second, affirmation of sojourn as an ongoing dimension of Israelite identity motivates and enables the hospitable welcome of others that is so central to its communal ethic.

In both cases above, openness to the Other is held up as a value to cling to, and a virtue to practice. If the ancestral stories provide a "compass" for the *ethnie*, the needle here points in a surprising direction. Ethnic establishment, the guarantee of a viable future for the *ethnie*, is shown to be dependent upon opening, rather than guarding, the boundaries against the Other. The openness is urged not only in examples of hospitality to the sojourner, but also in the affirmation of a sojourn identity for Israel itself that makes possible such welcome to the other. While it seems that such openness might militate against strong ethnic identity, it may be the case that this "sojourn virtue" rescues the ethnic myth from a rigidity that would ultimately weaken it. For an *ethnie* like Israel to survive, surrounded by stronger political powers and with fluctuating control over its ethnic homeland, flexibility in its interaction with the Other may have been a key resource. This sojourn text suggests such flexibility, proposing that openness to the Other is the paradoxical route to ethnic establishment. This openness needs to also be balanced with a certain distance, however, as the texts analyzed below will reveal.

Genesis 21:23

As in the previous text, in 21:23 the sojourn reference occurs in the context of interaction across an insider/outsider boundary, and a particular virtue is the focus of the ethical reflection. Here the virtue is חֶסֶד, a word with multiple significations in

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[109] Gossai and Amos touch on Abraham's sojourn in relation to his hospitality. Gossai, 40; Amos, 102-03.

[110] Fields highlights this twist in the case of Lot. Fields, 54.

Hebrew, translated here as "kindness" for the sake of convenience.[111] The discussion following will first examine the relation of 21:23 to its larger narrative context (20:1-21:34); second, attend to parallels with other treaty stories in Genesis; and third, flesh out the significance of חֶסֶד in relation to sojourn.

A. The Narrative Context of 21:23

The sojourn reference in 21:23 occurs in a speech of Abimelech, king of Gerar. Abimelech asks Abraham to swear that he will not deal falsely with Abimelech, his offspring, or his descendants, and that he will act with kindness (חֶסֶד) toward Abimelech and toward the land where Abraham has sojourned, הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־גַּרְתָּה בָּהּ. Abimelech requests this kindness from Abraham in parity with the kindness he claims he, Abimelech, has shown to Abraham. Abraham responds to Abimelech's request in the affirmative with a laconic "I swear," אָנֹכִי אִשָּׁבֵעַ.

The text of this short exchange in 21:22-24 contains within it connections backward and forward to the narrative both preceding and following the text. The episode begins in v. 22 with the phrase "at that time," וַיְהִי בָּעֵת הַהִוא. The phrase situates the conversation in the same general time period as the events preceding it, a reference which could encompass just the expulsion of Hagar recorded immediately beforehand, or extend backwards to also include the birth of Isaac, and even the wife-sister incident in Gerar in ch. 20.[112] In addition, Abimelech's speech itself makes explicit reference to past dealings between himself and Abraham, referring in v. 23 to the kindness he has shown to Abraham. This past kindness must be something that occurred during their first interaction, which is recorded in ch. 20.[113] Abimelech's words thus connect this text closely to the text of ch. 20. The exchange between the two men is in continuity with the story of their interaction in ch. 20, both temporally and thematically.[114]

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[111] The word חֶסֶד is notoriously hard to translate. For discussions of these translation difficulties see Aubrey R. Johnson, "HESED and HĀSÎD," in *Interpretationes ad Vetus Testamentum pertinentes Sigmundo Mowinckel septuagenario missae* (Oslo: Land og kirke, 1955), 100-12; Heber F. Peacock, "Translating 'Mercy', 'Steadfast Love', in the Book of Genesis," *BT* 31, no. 2 (1980): 201-07.

[112] Van Seters, *Abraham*, 186; Coats, *Genesis*, 155.

[113] Dillmann, *Die Genesis*, 271 (ET, 135); Gunkel, *Genesis*, 234 (ET, 232); Janzen, *Abraham*, 75; Scullion, 169; Vawter, 252; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 92.

[114] It is not clear whether spatial continuity is preserved as well between vv. 22-24 and the narrative preceding in 20:1-21:21. The text does not record a move of Abraham away from Gerar, and Abimelech speaks directly to Abraham in v. 22 with no intervening record of a journey to meet Abraham. This seems to suggest that Abraham is still in Gerar or its vicinity. However, the well episode in v. 25ff is located in Beer-sheba (vv. 31, 31, 33), and there is no textual note of a new

Likewise, the text of vv. 22-24 shows continuity with the well episode that follows it, beginning in v. 25. The two principal characters are the same, Abraham and Abimelech, and there is no textual note of a change in location. Temporally, there is a shift in v. 25 with the introduction of a perfect verb ("he argued," וְהוֹכִחַ) into the sequences of imperfect-consecutive verbs in v. 24 preceding and v. 26 following (both "he said," וַיֹּאמֶר). The use of the perfect verb indicates the beginning of a new time sequence; however, the use of the conjunction "and" (וְ) before it indicates some sense of succession with the sequence preceding it.

Thematically, the topic of oaths concerning land is shared between the two sections. The root שׁבע√ ("swear") repeats throughout both texts, appearing in vv. 23, 24, and 31, and echoing in the word play on שֶׁבַע ("seven") in vv. 28, 29, and 30, and בְּאֵר שֶׁבַע ("Beer-sheba") in vv. 31, 32, and 33. It is debatable whether the oaths reported in vv. 24 and 31 are the same oath, two separate oaths, or two different stages in one overarching agreement. The debate about possible continuity between the oaths intersects with source-critical analysis of the text.[115] The traditional position proposes two oaths or covenants, one recorded in vv. 22-24, 27, and 31, and the other appearing in the remainder of the text intervening.[116] Even this argument, however, posits continuity between vv. 22-24 and the well episode, even if only portions of the well episode are seen to continue the thread that is started in vv. 22-24.

Analyses of the final form of the text usually posit a level of unity between vv. 22-24 and the well episode, regarding the second oath as either a specific article of the first, more general oath;[117] as a follow-on negotiation growing out of the first oath, which is the basis for Abraham's complaint in v. 25;[118] or as a continuation of one overarching and unified oath.[119] Regardless of the precise relation between the texts, however, it is clear that the two segments are closely related, and that the

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location between vv. 22-24 and v. 25ff. Ultimately, the evidence for a geographical setting of vv. 22-24 is inconclusive, and continuity with the narrative preceding it is best established on other grounds.

[115] For a bibliography of scholarship on the composition of the covenant account, see Jonathan D. Safren, "Ahuzzath and the Pact of Beer-Sheba," *ZAW* 101, no. 2 (1989): 185.

[116] Gunkel, *Genesis*, 233-34 (ET, 230-31); von Rad, *Genesis*, 201-02 (ET, 230-31); Skinner, 325; Van Seters, *Abraham*, 185-87; Vawter, 251-52; Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 423-24 (ET, 346-47). These authors do not all agree on the assignation of these texts to particular sources, but the textual divisions themselves are fairly uniform.

[117] Coats, *Genesis*, 156; Delitzsch, *Neuer*, 3222 (ET, 81).

[118] Fretheim, "Genesis," 491; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 95.

[119] Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 86-87, 92-93; Speiser, *Genesis*, 160.

material in the well episode is significant for the interpretation of the exchange in vv. 22-24.

The narrative is structured in a way that encourages the reading of 21:22-24 as part of an overall arc that begins in 20:1 and concludes in 21:34. As discussed above, the continuity of narrative devices such as characters, setting, chronology, and thematic elements contribute to the unity of the text. Most striking among these literary devices, however, is the *inclusio* bracketing the narrative between twin references to Abraham's sojourn in 20:1 and 21:34. The previous discussion of these two references focused on the significance of including the birth of Isaac (21:1-7) within this narrative arc. Here, the discussion will focus on the progression of the narrative arc as a whole. The *inclusio* functions to identify the sequence of episodes within it as one larger narrative unit. This intentional structuring locates our text, 21:22-24, within a specified chain of events: wife-sister deception (20:1-18), birth of the promised son (21:1-7), expulsion of the dis-elect son and his mother (21:8-21), and territorial negotiations (21:22-34). This larger narrative structure not only brings the text preceding and following 21:22-24 into significant relation with it, but also calls for a comparison with similar narrative sequences in the interpretation of this text; specifically, the narrative sequences in chs. 12-13 and in ch. 26. Once it is established that 21:22-24 is part of an intentional narrative sequence, the parallel sequences of chs. 12-13 and 26 become an integral part of the analysis of 21:23. We turn now to a brief survey of the relevant thematic parallels between the narrative sequences of chs. 12-13, 20-21, and 26, before taking a closer look at the text of 21:23.

B. Sojourn, Ethics, and Territorial Boundaries in chs. 12-13, 20-21, and 26

The similarities between the three wife-sister stories in Genesis have long been noted, and the source-critical debate surrounding these similarities thoroughly rehearsed.[120] This analysis will highlight only a few of the similarities in the larger narrative sequences encompassing the wife-sister stories, focusing especially on aspects relevant for the interpretation of the territorial negotiations that follow after the wife-sister material. The analysis is not exhaustive; rather, it is specifically centered on issues of sojourn and boundaries as they relate to the oath in 21:23.

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[120] See the previous discussion on 26:3 for a bibliography of references.

It is striking that all three wife-sister tales commence with an explicit reference to sojourn.[121] Two are itinerary notices, one reporting that Abraham sojourned in Egypt (12:10) and the other that he sojourned in Gerar (20:1); the third is a divine command to Isaac to sojourn in Gerar (26:3).[122] Thus all three narrative sequences situate the protagonists in a relationship of sojourn vis-à-vis their settings, both spatially and socially. The local monarchs, Pharaoh and Abimelech, are characterized by contrast as the purveyors of power in their respective lands, the autochthonous authorities with whom the patriarchs have to deal in their attempts to establish security and territorial holdings for themselves in lands where their rights are in question.

In all three stories the patriarchs resort to a deception, portraying their wives as their sisters (12:13; 20:2; 26:7), ostensibly with the motivation of gaining physical safety (12:12; 20:11; 26:7, 9).[123] Allowing for variations in the details of the deception and its discovery, there are a few key similarities in the ruse and its results. In the plot development of each story, the discovery of the ploy is followed by a confrontation with the native monarch, who reproaches the patriarch for his misdeed (12:18-19; 20:9-10; 26:9-10).[124] The confrontation between monarch and patriarch is the high point of the stories' drama. After the confrontation, the conflict subsides into a level of harmony as two elements form the denouement of the plot: the patriarch receives material wealth, and the patriarch moves his habitation away from the wronged monarch.[125]

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[121] Several commentators highlight the danger to an alien in strange territory as the central plot crisis of the stories (among these, Petersen identifies this danger as the central theme only in ch. 26). See Miller, 553-54; Thompson, *Origin*, 53; Westermann, *Verheißungen*, 63-64 (ET, 62-63); Petersen: 42-43.

[122] These three references are discussed in detail in Chapters 2 and 3.

[123] See the previous discussion of 19:9 for references comparing the actions of the patriarchs to anthropological patterns of "sexual hospitality." J.K. Hoffmeier suggests instead that the wife-sister stories reflect the practice of diplomatic marriages, a proposal that serves to place the sexual relations offered under the umbrella of socially sanctioned marriage, but maintains the same pattern of exchanging women belonging to the household of a sojourner for safety and rights to settle in the land. James K. Hoffmeier, "The Wives' Tales of Genesis 12, 20 & 26 and the Covenants at Beer-sheba," *TynBul* 43, no. 1 (1992): 81-99.

[124] All three speeches include the phrase, "What have you done?" (מֶה־עָשִׂיתָ), 12:18; 20:9; 26:10—doubly emphasized in 20:9 as "things that ought not to be done." For discussions of the form of this accusation-question (*Beschuldigungsformel*) and the indictment it communicates, see Biddle: 604; Bruckner, 179; Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 196-97; Van Seters, *Abraham*, 173.

[125] D.A. Nicholas traces a similar sequence in the three wife-sister tales, although his tri-partite pattern combines the final two elements above. Dean Andrew Nicholas, "Deception as a Motif in the Pentateuch" (PhD dissertation, Hebrew Union College—Jewish Institute of Religion, 2000), 68-80.

While there are differences in the timing of the acquisition, the motivation for the enrichment, and even the stated source of the wealth,[126] it nevertheless remains a common outcome that the patriarchs emerge from the deception episodes richer (12:16 and 13:2; 20:14; 26:12-14). Likewise, there are variations in the extent and stated motivation of the relocation that ends the episode, but a monarchical order regarding a change of residence is clear in each incident.[127] In 12:19-20 Abraham is forcibly expelled from Egypt and leaves the circle of Pharaoh's authority; the remainder of the narrative sequence locates him in Canaan, and his territorial negotiations are not with Pharaoh but Lot. In 26:16-17 Abimelech asks Isaac to leave, which he does. Here, however, Isaac's move takes him only from Gerar to the valley of Gerar, and in the subsequent negotiations over wells he continues to deal with Abimelech, whose authority extends over Isaac's new location as well. In 20:15 Abraham is invited to settle anywhere in Abimelech's land that pleases him. While this may be interpreted positively, and it is true that Abraham is not expelled from Abimelech's land, the speech nevertheless implies a request that he change his location from the place where he resides at the time of the wife-sister deception. It seems that Abimelech wants Abraham a little further away—perhaps in his land, but not in his city. It is unclear when it is that Abraham moves out of Gerar and where exactly he is located in the episodes from 21:1 to 21:24, but at least by 21:25 he is located further away, in Beer-sheba. Here the well negotiations take place with Abimelech, who is represented by the narrative as having some sort of territorial authority in the area of Beer-sheba.[128]

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[126] Van Seters parses these variations regarding the enrichment and the expulsion in light of different textual sources; Polzin offers a structural interpretation of the differences within a synchronic framework. My analysis focuses on the elements in common between the incidents. See Van Seters, *Abraham*, 175, 188-89; Polzin: 85-90.

[127] In 26:16 Abimelech tells Isaac to move away because has become "too powerful." While Coats maintains that the breach in the relationship has nothing to do with the wife-sister deception and is related only to Isaac's ability to wrest wealth from the land (26:12-14), it is possible to interpret Isaac's "power" in a broader sense that also includes his deception and the resulting decree for his protection. Fretheim, for example, argues that Isaac's wealth is due in part to Abimelech's edict protecting him, and thus is related closely to the wife-sister incident. See Coats, *Genesis*, 190-91, 194; Fretheim, "Genesis," 527. The theme of wealth creating division and necessitating separation also appears in 13:5-7, where the separation between Abraham and Lot is attributed to the increase in their wealth. In chs. 12-13 the expulsion from Egypt results from the wife-sister deception, and the separation from Lot results from material prosperity; in ch. 26, both themes are evident in Isaac's expulsion from Gerar.

[128] Vawter notes, "At least for the purposes of this story Beer-sheba is counted within Abimelech's sphere of influence, even though vs. 32 distinguishes it from 'the land of the Philistines.'" Vawter, 252.

Two of the three narrative sequences move immediately after the wife-sister story to an episode of territorial negotiation (13:5 and 26:18). In ch. 21 additional material interrupts the sequence, reporting the birth of Isaac and the expulsion of Ishmael and Hagar. The transition to the territorial negotiation happens with our text in 21:22. We will return to a brief examination of the contribution made by the additional material in ch. 21. At this point, however, it is sufficient to note a few aspects of the common thematic material shared by the three narrative sequences.

In all three sequences, a sojourn scenario unfolds with similar features. The territorial negotiations that follow, then, happen against this complex backdrop: (1) an offer by a sojourner of an exchange of "goods" (sex for safety) that is judged ethically reprehensible by the local monarch when the sex offered is revealed to be adulterous;[129] (2) an end to the transaction between sojourner and monarch and a return (or preservation) of the "goods" in undamaged form; (3) the enrichment of the patriarch by resources of the land where he sojourns; and (4) a move by the patriarch to a location further from the local monarch's central habitation.

The territorial negotiations following the wife-sister material in each sequence also share common patterns and themes, although chs. 21 and 26 offer far closer parallels than those in ch. 13.[130] In all three sequences, the patriarch moves away from the direct circle of the native monarch and, by stages, deeper into territory more traditionally identified as the land promised to Israel (Negev followed by Bethel in ch. 13, Gerar's general territory followed by Beer-sheba in ch. 21, and the valley of Gerar followed by Beer-sheba in ch. 26). During or after the move, strife develops between herdsmen over rights to water and/or pasturage (in 13:7 the conflict is between Lot's herdsmen and Abraham's, in 21:25 Abraham complains that Abimelech's servants have seized a well he had dug, and in 26:19-21 quarrels

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[129] The moral sensitivity displayed by the local monarch—highlighted by a contrast with the indifference evidenced by the patriarchs—is a striking element of all three tales. See discussions in Albertz, *Exilszeit*, 205 (ET, 264-65); Alter, "Sodom," 155-56; Miscall: 32, 34-35; Moberly, 71-72; Polzin: 93; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 291.

[130] J.D. Safren enumerates the parallels between the covenant episodes in chs. 21 and 26, while Fokkelman, Turner, and Wenham highlight similarities between the two narratives on a wider scale including the wife-sister stories. Parallels which also include the material of ch. 13 are noted by Janzen, Sailhamer, Van Seters, and Westermann. Hauge offers an overarching motif analysis that spans the wife-sister stories and the territorial negotiations following them; he identifies many elements similar to those I describe, but with less exegetical detail, and draws conclusions in the direction of an argument concerning exilic themes. See Safren: 183-90; Fokkelman, 113-14; Turner, *Genesis*, 114; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 187; Janzen, *Abraham*, 101-02; Sailhamer, 189; Van Seters, *Abraham*, 189-91; Hauge, "Struggles II," 114-15; Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 200 (ET, 172).

erupt between Isaac's herdsmen and Gerar's over the possession of two wells). A negotiation occurs (initiated by Abraham in 13:8 and by Abimelech in 21:22 and 26:26), in which a positive past relationship is cited as reason motivating an agreement (13:8 "for we are kin;" 21:23 "as I have done kindness to you;" 26:29 "as we have done to you nothing but good"). The three agreements have reciprocal structures, with an equality of obligation required of the two sides in each (in 13:9 each is to take a direction mirroring the other in the opposite direction; in 21:23 acts of kindness are expected to be reciprocal; in 26:29 both parties are to refrain from harm to one another). The dialogue involved makes use of words carrying ethical connotations, a matter analyzed at greater length in the discussion below. The agreement itself concerns rights of land use or possession (in ch. 13:11-12 Abraham and Lot choose territories and settle in them; in 21:30 the issue is possession of the well of Beer-sheba; in 26:29 the general oath of nonaggression connects with the narrative context of digging wells whose ownership in uncontested to suggest Isaac's establishment of territorial integrity in the area of Beer-sheba [131]). The land negotiation establishes a territorial boundary (or at least, distance) between the two sides involved, and is followed by a physical separation between the parties (in 13:11 Lot journeys away from Abraham and they separate from each other; in 21:32 Abimelech leaves Abraham and returns to the land of the Philistines; in 26:31 Abimelech and his men depart from Isaac).

The patriarch stays in the land of the promise, where he receives a divine word reiterating the gift of the land (13:14-17; 26:24; in 21:33 there is only a description of Abraham "calling on the name of Yahweh," but it parallels Isaac's response in 26:25 after receiving the divine promise). The patriarch then performs a symbolic act establishing presence and memory in the land (in 13:18 Abraham pitches his tent and builds an altar; in 21:33 Abraham plants a tamarisk tree; in 26:25 Isaac builds an altar, pitches his tent, and digs a well). The patriarch is relieved from competition for the territory and experiences a degree of settled security in the area. Even though legal possession of a land holding is not firmly established, the conclusion of the episode communicates a sense of tentative promise fulfillment with regard to the patriarch's belonging in the land.[132] This sense of the initiation of

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[131] Coats argues that the nonaggression oath is specifically a resolution of the well conflicts. Coats, *Genesis*, 194.

[132] Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 94, 196; Janzen, *Abraham*, 77.

promise fulfillment is augmented within the larger arc of the narrative sequences by the inclusion in 21:1-8 of the miraculous birth of Isaac, in 26:12 of the success of Isaac in cultivating the land, and in 21:22 and 26:24, 28 of the affirmation of divine presence with the patriarch.

The establishment of the patriarch in the land demands the relinquishment of competing claims to the same territory. In 13:11 Lot willingly chooses to depart from Canaan and claim territory elsewhere. This decision is made not by an autochthonous landholder, but by a member of Abraham's kin group. Lot's choice is bound up in his exclusion from the circle of the elect who receive the divine promise.[133] In ch. 21 Abimelech, the local monarch, concedes the rights to a well at Beer-sheba to Abraham. The theme of election is raised not here but earlier in the narrative sequence, when Ishmael is expelled from Abraham's household (21:14) and excluded from the myth of ethnic election expressed in the divine promise (21:12).[134] In ch. 26 Isaac's establishment in Beer-sheba is recognized by the mutual nonaggression oath with Abimelech (26:29), whose men no longer contest Isaac's water rights in the area (21:25, 32). Here Isaac has no competitors for election, but the verses immediately preceding and following the narrative frame the whole in the context of the competition between Isaac's two sons, one of whom will be excluded from the promise. These two repeated themes of promise fulfillment and exclusion of the dis-elect, then, help to explain and integrate the inclusion of the episodes of Isaac's birth and Ishmael's expulsion (21:1-21) in the narrative sequence of chs. 20-21.[135]

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[133] See Wenham's insightful comments on the "theological geography of Lot's decision." Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 298.

[134] Cassuto's comparison of the first and second wife-sister tales highlights the departures of Lot and Ishmael following each story respectively. Cassuto, 296.

[135] The expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael also touches on the issue of compassion for the outsider, which connects thematically to sojourn. Amos, Fretheim, Gossai, T. Reis, E. Tamez, P. Trible, M. Tsevat, Van Seters, and Wenham note textual connections between Hagar's expulsion and Israelite sojourn in Egypt. The connection invites exploration, but a broader analysis of exclusion and oppression themes in Genesis, and expansion of the analysis to Exodus texts, would exceed the space limitations of this project. For the above discussions see Amos, 90-94, 122; Fretheim, "Genesis," 488-90; Gossai, 12-21; Pamela Tamarkin Reis, "Hagar Requited," *JSOT* 87 (2000): 5-109; Elsa Tamez, "The Woman Who Complicated the History of Salvation," in *New Eyes for Reading: Biblical and Theological Reflections by Women from the Third World*, ed. John S. Pobee and Bärbel von Wartenberg-Potter (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986), 15-17; Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 13-34; Matitiahu Tsevat, *The Meaning of the Book of Job and Other Biblical Studies: Essays on the Literature and Religion of the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Ktav, 1980), 69-70; Van Seters, *Abraham*, 200-01; Van Seters, *Prologue*, 265; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 9-13.

To summarize, the land negotiation episodes share the following themes: (1) movement of the patriarch into territory more clearly included in the divine promises; (2) negotiation of a territorial boundary (with either the native monarch or the dis-elect kin) that establishes land rights for the patriarch; (3) reciprocal commitment pledged in an agreement that is couched in terms of past relations and freighted with ethical vocabulary; (4) physical withdrawal of the other party; and (5) establishment of the patriarch's presence in the area by divine promise and symbolic action.

The summary above, taken together with the preceding summary of the wife-sister material, shows why the land negotiations are to be interpreted in continuity with the wife-sister stories. First, the thematic coherence between the episodes is strong. Both involve negotiations over commodities that are in question for a sojourner: safety, territorial rights, and wealth gleaned from the land. Both involve the definition of territorial boundaries and the movement of the protagonists across these boundaries toward positions where peaceful existence is possible. Both end in the affirmation of land rights for one or both sides. Both, finally, reflect on ethical obligations with a strong affirmation of expected "right" behavior. The key distinction in this regard is that the patriarch in his interaction with the other party *does not* meet the ethical standard of right behavior in the first case, but *does* in the second.

Second, the latter episodes of land negotiations refer back to the former episodes of the wife-sister stories. This allusion functions not only at the textual level noted above (continuity of characters, setting, etc.) but at the thematic level. The language of *relationships* and of *ethics* used in the dialogues of the land negotiations are inextricably bound up with the precedent of the wife-sister stories. We turn now to a close examination of the dialogue in 21:22-24, examining first its allusions to the wife-sister episode preceding it, and then its specific use of ethical language (חֶסֶד), noting parallels and contrasts with the negotiations in chs. 13 and 26 when relevant.

C. Sojourn and חֶסֶד in 21:23

Abimelech begins his speech in 21:22 with the statement, "God is with you in all that you do." The mirror statement in 26:28 adds emphasis with an infinitive absolute, "we have seen clearly" (רָאוֹ רָאִינוּ). In both cases, the request for a treaty is anchored in this introductory statement which is given as the motivation for

Abimelech's appeal. What has Abimelech seen that brings him to the conclusion that God is with the patriarch? And why should this lead him to request a treaty?

While almost all interpretations of this statement point to the preceding episodes,[136] not all are in agreement as to which aspect of prior events demonstrates God's presence with the patriarch most definitively. Alter, Davidson, Janzen, and Scullion cite Abraham's material prosperity, an interpretation that may refer to events in chs. 20-21, but is primarily dependent on the parallel with ch. 26, where Isaac's affluence is textually prominent (vv. 12-14).[137] K.D. Sakenfeld, von Rad, and Vawter emphasize the display of divine power in the wife-sister story of ch. 20, arguing that Abimelech did not feel safe near Abraham because of God's action to protect him, and thus sought a treaty to stabilize the relationship and avoid Abraham's enmity.[138] Gunkel and Hamilton also cite the wife-sister episode, but focus on Abraham's effective prayer of intercession (20:17) leading Abimelech to recognize his close relationship with God.[139] Fretheim and Wenham rightly draw attention to the phrase "in all that you do," arguing that God's presence with Abraham is manifest in a pervasive and continuing success, one which may include the events of chs. 20 and 21, but also indicates an overarching "tenor of life" observable in all its circumstances.[140] Regardless of the specifics, it is clear that here, as in ch. 26, (1) the patriarch is in a position of power, (2) this power has been observed by the Abimelech in his past interaction with the patriarch, and (3) the power is expressed as the presence of God accompanying the patriarch. Here sojourn plays an interesting role. The events in which God's accompaniment of the patriarch has become evident are specifically sojourn situations. Despite the patriarch's relatively powerless status of sojourn, then, God's presence has been with him and has given him power—a non-traditional, surprising, and even ironic kind of clout—that motivates the other to seek a treaty with him.[141]

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[136] Westermann, however, sees no basis for the statement "God is with you" in 21:22 and infers that it stems from ch. 26, where the statement has an obvious foundation. Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 425 (ET, 348).

[137] Alter, *Genesis*, 101; Davidson, 89; Janzen, *Abraham*, 75; Scullion, 169.

[138] Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, *The Meaning of Hesed in the Hebrew Bible: A New Inquiry*, HSM (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1978), 70-72; von Rad, *Genesis*, 201 (ET, 231); Vawter, 252.

[139] Gunkel, *Genesis*, 233 (ET, 231); Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 88.

[140] Fretheim, "Genesis," 249; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 92.

[141] The parallels with ch. 13 are less direct, but it can be observed that the need for an agreement between Abraham and Lot arises because of an increase in wealth, which the text portrays as having been acquired during the preceding sojourn in Egypt. The increase in power, then, arises out of sojourn here as well, and here as in the other scenarios, necessitates a treaty.

Abimelech next expresses a negative request, that Abraham *not deal falsely* (תִשְׁקֹר) with him (21:23). Why does he request this? Patently, it is because Abraham has deceived him before, in the wife-sister episode earlier.[142] The patriarch's lie about his wife has been labeled bad behavior in all three wife-sister stories, and here Abimelech asks for a pledge from Abraham that his future interaction with Abimelech will be different. A past model of relations is rejected, then, and a new one suggested. In the past model the patriarch sojourned in the monarch's territory and made an offer of exchange that involved a misrepresentation of his tender. The patriarch is now outside (or further from the center of) the monarch's territory, has gained power (by divinely granted prosperity and/or a divine display of power), and a different type of interaction is proposed that contrasts with the past model.[143] Sojourn, however, is not simply a thing of the past. The patriarch, though further from the local monarch's seat of power, is still in a tenuous position with regard to the land he inhabits. Ch. 21 emphasizes that Abraham is still a sojourner (v. 34), and his agreement with Abimelech explicitly reiterates his sojourn status (v. 23). Though his sojourn continues, however, his interaction with others is to change.

The new type of interaction proposed is clearly characterized by reciprocity of obligation. In the wife-sister stories, power was asymmetrical.[144] Each party in the interaction played a distinct role, and no similarities were evident between sojourner and ruler, receiver and giver, trickster and dupe.[145] In the land negotiation episodes, however, structural symmetry is prominent. Abraham's appeal in ch. 13 calls for mirror movements of separation between him and Lot (13:9) and parallel actions of settling for each of them in their allotted territories (13:12). In ch. 26 Abimelech requests of Isaac that he refrain from doing them evil, just as they have refrained from "touching" him; i.e., doing him harm (26:29). In 26:31 Isaac sends them away in peace, just as they mention that they have sent him away in peace (26:29). As in

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[142] Fretheim, "Genesis," 491; Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 88-89; Janzen, *Abraham*, 75; von Rad, *Genesis*, 201 (ET, 231); Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 92.

[143] In 26:29 Abimelech and his men ask that Isaac "do to us no evil," and in 13:8 Abraham says to Lot, "Let there be no strife between you and me." Both negations imply past or possible misdeeds that are to be avoided by the new agreement.

[144] Gossai shows that Abimelech held the power initially as king and owner of the land, and Abraham held it at the end of the story as the prophet with the power of mediation for the restoration of life. Gossai, 112-13.

[145] In chs. 20-21 a striking parallel emerges between the fertility of Abimelech's wives after Abraham's prayer, and the miraculous birth of Isaac immediately following. Here the symmetry is between God's dealing with each of the two families, however, rather than a reciprocal interaction between the two men exhibiting parity of power and equality of obligation.

ch. 13, then, the emphasis is on territorial separation and the preservation of a boundary. In ch. 21 Abimelech requests of Abraham that he act with kindness to him, his posterity, and the land where he has sojourned, just as Abimelech has acted with kindness toward him. The reciprocity of commitment is similar to that of the other two incidents, and the element of boundary establishment and territorial separation is perhaps also evident (although to a much lesser extent) in Abimelech's concession of the well to Abraham and his subsequent departure from Beer-sheba. While these similarities to the other agreements are evident, however, the content of what is sworn by Abraham in ch. 21 stands out.

The treaty between Isaac and Abimelech in ch. 26 is often described as a treaty of nonaggression.[146] Its emphasis is on restraint from harm and respect for territorial integrity. The treaty between Laban and Jacob in 31:43-54 is cited as an even clearer example of a mutual nonaggression pact, or border treaty, with a similar pledge to refrain from harm and a pronounced emphasis on a boundary between the territories.[147] The agreement between Abraham and Lot also shares with these treaties the features of territorial separation and restraint from conflict.[148] Is the agreement in ch. 21 likewise a treaty of nonaggression? Many commentators call it by this term.[149] While it may share the features of such treaties, however, its reference to kindness (חֶסֶד) is unique among these texts.[150] This element demands close interpretive attention.

Abimelech's request for kindness (חֶסֶד) from Abraham is in parallel with the kindness he claims to have shown Abraham in the past. Again, this reference points

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[146] Coats, *Genesis*, 194; Janzen, *Abraham*, 102; Victor H. Matthews, "The Wells of Gerar," *BA* 49, no. 2 (1986): 124; Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 523 (ET, 428).

[147] Alter, *Genesis*, 175; Dennis J. McCarthy, "Three Covenants in Genesis," *CBQ* 26 (1964): 179-80; Davidson, 177; Dillmann, *Die Genesis*, 336 (ET, 263); Fretheim, "Genesis," 558; Gunkel, *Genesis*, 350 (ET, 339); Janzen, *Abraham*, 125; Sarna, 202; Scullion, 224-25; Skinner, 399; Speiser, *Genesis*, 249; Vawter, 342-43; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 279; Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 609 (ET, 499).

[148] Westermann notes the similarities between the agreements in chs. 13 and 31; Coote and Ord include the treaty of ch. 26 in the comparison. Westermann, *Promises*, 84; Westermann, *Verheißungen*, 82 n. 48 (ET, 84 n. 48); Coote and Ord, 145.

[149] Davidson, 89; Fretheim, "Genesis," 249; Janzen, *Abraham*, 102; Matthews: 124; Pagolu, 75; Speiser, *Genesis*, 160; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 95; Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 426 (ET, 348). Vawter, by contrast, believes it is a type of suzerainty treaty and calls it an oath of fealty. Vawter, 252.

[150] חֶסֶד is, however, often associated with the wider concept of covenant in the HB. F.I. Andersen reviews scholarly understanding of the logical connection between the two concepts, concluding that covenant follows from חֶסֶד, as it does in the text here, rather than covenant issuing in חֶסֶד and constituting its necessary framework. Francis I. Andersen, "Yahweh, the Kind and Sensitive God," in *God Who Is Rich in Mercy: Essays Presented to Dr. D.B. Knox*, ed. Peter T. O'Brien and David G. Peterson (Homebush West: Lancer Books, 1986), 41-44, 53-54.

to their past dealings in ch. 20. Some commentators point to Abimelech's specific invitation to Abraham to dwell in his land as the prior kindness referenced here;[151] others broaden the allusion to Abimelech's general forbearance encompassing all his responses to Abraham in the wife-sister stories.[152] Taken together with the preceding reference to falseness, what Abimelech is communicating is that Abraham's way of relating in ch. 20 is rejected, and Abimelech's way of relating in ch. 20 is affirmed. What he wants from Abraham is a pledge that he will act like Abimelech acted toward him, and not as Abraham acted toward Abimelech, in the wife-sister incident.[153] *Abimelech's* actions are characterized as kindness (חֶסֶד), and his request of Abraham is that he pledge to act similarly toward him.

Sakenfeld defines חֶסֶד as a voluntary action on behalf of another to give aid or assistance in time of trouble.[154] H.-J. Zobel writes, "It is an act that preserves or promotes life. It is intervention on behalf of someone suffering misfortune or distress. It is demonstration of friendship or piety."[155] It is striking that חֶסֶד as an ethical action reflects a relational framework. In Genesis, חֶסֶד between individuals is performed either in the context of a kin relationship (as happens earlier between Abraham and Sarah in 20:13), or in the context of a "secondary" relationship in response to an unusual act of kindness initiated by one party in the relationship.[156] In other words, חֶסֶד is benevolent ethical action offered within a kin relationship, *or*, within a non-kin relationship that is raised temporarily to the status of a kinship bond by the mutual exchange of benevolent action. Abimelech's mention of his past חֶסֶד to Abraham thus points to his elevation of their relationship by "an unusual act of kindness,"[157] one worthy of kin,[158] and demands of Abraham a response in kind.

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[151] Dillmann, *Die Genesis*, 271 (ET, 135); Vawter, 252; Rashi, 91.

[152] Janzen, *Abraham*, 75; Gunkel, *Genesis*, 234 (ET, 232); Scullion, 169; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 92.

[153] In chs. 13 and 26 the exemplary behavior requested is not explicitly situated in the past of wife-sister episodes, but in both cases the initiator of the negotiation occupies the moral high ground as Abimelech does here.

[154] Sakenfeld, 81.

[155] H.-J. Zobel, "חֶסֶד," in *ThWAT*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1982), 56 (ET H.-J. Zobel, "חֶסֶד," in *TDOT*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1986], 51).

[156] Sakenfeld, 58, 233; Zobel, "חֶסֶד," 51-53 (ET, 46-48). See Gen. 19:19; 20:13; 24:49; 40:14; and 47:29.

[157] Zobel, "חֶסֶד," 51 (ET, 47).

[158] Janzen argues that Abimelech has acted in ways "worthy of kin" by his generosity with land (echoing Abraham's generosity with Lot in ch. 13) and his great respect for Sarah's name. Janzen, *Abraham*, 75.

When Abraham pledges to act with חֶסֶד, then, he agrees to act toward Abimelech with a loyalty characteristic of family relations. Janzen writes,

> The ethics of *hesed* is the ethics of loyalty between family and clan members. "Kindness" is the loyalty one shows to one's "kind" or kin. It is whatever response one owes to one's kin in a given situation. …
> It has been observed that covenant relations arise as a form of substitute kinship relations. That is, covenant relations formally extend kin ethics beyond the range of kin relations, implicitly exploring the possibility that different kinship communities may treat one another within the horizon of a common human kinship under God.[159]

The treaty between Abraham and Abimelech benefits from interpretation within its narrative context. First, the חֶסֶד exchanged contrasts with the "falseness" of Abraham's past actions in the wife-sister episode. There, the relationship was one of market exchange, and Abraham violated even accepted market ethics by his deception. Here, the relationship is elevated above market exchange to mutual assistance worthy of a kin relationship. C.H. Hinnant observes that the covenant relationship sworn here and the accompanying gift presented by Abraham resists the moral neutrality of a market relationship, creating instead an atmosphere of hospitality and gift exchange.[160] D.J. McCarthy also notes that covenants were thought to establish a quasi-familial unity between the treaty partners.[161] The pact of חֶסֶד (initiated by Abimelech) and the gift (initiated by Abraham) thus work together to create a new relational framework, one that mitigates hostility and paves the way for political renewal after conflict.[162]

Second, the agreement offers a unique contribution to the ongoing narrative theme of boundaries and territorial integrity. The wife-sister tales emphasized asymmetry of power, difference of role and characterization between the patriarch and the local king, ethical transgression by the patriarch, and physical ejection of the patriarch from the king's center of power. The subsequent land negotiations emphasize parity of power, reciprocity of obligation, and ethical fidelity. With regard

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[159] Ibid., 75-76.

[160] Charles H. Hinnant, "The Patriarchal Narratives of *Genesis* and the Ethos of Gift Exchange," in *The Question of the Gift: Essays across Disciplines*, ed. Mark Osteen, Routledge Studies in Anthropology (London: Routledge, 2002), 113-14.

[161] Dennis J. McCarthy, *Old Testament Covenant: A Survey of Current Opinions*, Growing Points in Theology (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972), 33.

[162] V.H. Matthews likewise identifies the gift as a gesture allowing both sides to save face in a dispute that might otherwise have become a mutually destructive confrontation. Matthews: 122.

to the land, the parties are further apart, with clearer boundaries between them. At the same time, the patriarch becomes further rooted in the land he inhabits, through concession from the other, renewed promise from God, and symbolic action the patriarch himself performs. The themes unite to communicate the affirmation of clear, established boundaries for territorial legitimacy. This thrust is evident in all three of the wife-sister/land-negotiation narrative sequences. Yet the land negotiations are not simply about separation. Here in ch. 21 the agreement centers on חֶסֶד, a virtue that crosses boundaries and brings individuals closer than their social relationship dictates. A tension is operative here between distance and closeness, between establishing boundaries and rising above them.

Here the third aspect of the narrative context is most helpful. The reflections on ethics and relationships expressed by the treaty are situated in a framework of sojourn. The entire narrative sequence of wife-sister deception and land negotiation is bracketed by sojourn, and the treaty itself highlights sojourn explicitly once more. Sojourn is in itself a word that expresses tension, communicating both alienation and belonging (a *stranger* in the land, *residing* for an extended period). It is this polyvalent sojourn status that feeds the sophisticated balance at the heart of the treaty Abraham makes with Abimelech, and the carefully woven narrative surrounding it.

The central claim of this study is that sojourn references in Genesis ultimately contribute to the strength of ethnic identity. Here, sojourn crystallizes an ethical and relational stance. Abraham, the representative of ethnic Israel, tries out two models of relating in a sojourn context. The exercise is significant enough for repetition, with variations in nuance, three times in the patriarchal narratives. Each time the first model fails. The disempowered sojourner bargaining for power and rights via deception is reprimanded, and he moves away. A second model is successful: the patriarch sojourns, but not too close to the native center of power. His dealings with others exhibit both respectful reciprocity and a measure of distance. He is established in the land—still a sojourner, but looking ahead to possession. His relationship to the ethnoscape gains in strength and clarity.

The contrast, however, is not facile. Fruitful sojourn is not reduced simply to keeping a sufficient distance. The treaty of ch. 21 upholds an ethical virtue, one that provides a positive and powerful counter to the deception of the first model that culminated only in distance and dissatisfaction. Proper sojourn relations are to be characterized by חֶסֶד, a boundary-crossing virtue that draws sojourner and native

together into a symbolic approximation of kinship. Israel's ethnic identity, then, is not simply about establishing boundaries. The focus on a sojourn ethic—one demanding both חֶסֶד and, as we have seen in ch. 19, hospitality—means that the ethnic boundary is *supposed* to be crossed. Sojourn, then, gives Israelite ethnic identity the resources for a complex maintenance of both distance and intimacy with the Other in the land. The combined features of both strength and flexibility thus give Israel's ethnic myth maximum utility in serving an *ethnie* with a continuously problematic relationship to its territory.

Genesis 23:4

The previous discussion suggested that the flexibility that sojourn contributes to ethnic identity lies in its multi-vocal quality, a characteristic that allows it to maintain a balanced tension between vectors that otherwise might be in conflict. Sojourn's preservation of tension without succumbing to extremes at either pole allow it to function as a successful model for interaction between the *ethnie* and the Other, providing fertile ground for relationships that are complex and yet sustainable. In the story of Abraham's purchase of the cave of Machpelah, sojourn mediates the dangers that lurk in two possible extremes of interaction. Its contribution to ethnic identity, however, lies not only in its functional utility as a model for relationships with the Other, but also in its intensification of elements of territoriality and election. Sojourn thus contributes both flexibility *and* strength to ethnic identity. This discussion will focus on both aspects, looking first at the tension in the text that is kept carefully balanced by sojourn, and second at the contribution of this sojourn text to the ethnic myth.

A. A Sojourn Ethic Avoiding Two Extremes

The negotiation between Abraham and the Hittites[163] over a burial cave for Sarah is lengthy, occupying an entire chapter (23:1-20). Its length provides a large canvas on which an intricate process can be portrayed, one which carefully balances the interests of both parties in this complex negotiation. After a brief introduction reporting the facts surrounding the death of Sarah, Abraham's first address to the Hittites (23:4) launches the dialogue with a statement that frames the issues at hand: "I am a sojourner and an alien (גֵּר־וְתוֹשָׁב)[164] with you; grant me a burial holding with you so I may bury my dead out of my sight."

Abraham begins his supplication by describing himself as a sojourner amidst the Hittites. His sojourn status is the issue at the heart of the ensuing negotiation. Abraham is an outsider to the community, but he resides there on a more than transient basis. Because he is not a native and yet at the same time has chosen to remain, his needs are unique: he has no land holdings, as is to be expected of an outsider, yet he now needs a land holding, for he is not simply a visitor who can return to his own native home to bury his dead. In the limbo of belonging and not-belonging characteristic of sojourn, Abraham seeks to strengthen his tie to the land where he sojourns, by acquiring a plot of land to be used for family burial.

A majority of commentators point out a basic polarity expressed in Abraham's opening statement between his legal status as a sojourner and the

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[163] The mention of the Hittites here, like the Philistines in 21:34, is a noted anachronism. There has been discussion surrounding the possibility of an earlier presence for the Hittites in Hebron, but the majority of commentators view the designation as a rhetorical (rather than historical) term denoting the original inhabitants of the land, an archaism used by a later author to set the story in the legendary past. This usage accords with the interpretation of the sojourn reference here as a component of the ethnic myth setting up a model for the interaction of Israel with the Other. For discussions see Cohn, 86; Robert L. Cohn, "Negotiating (with) the Natives: Ancestors and Identity in Genesis," *HTR* 96, no. 2 (2003): 151, 159; Van Seters, "Terms," 78-79. Commentary discussions include Amos, 108, 131; Driver, *Genesis*, 228-30; Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 127; von Rad, *Genesis*, 211 (ET, 242); Sarna, 167-68; Skinner, 336; Vawter, 261-63; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 126, 205; Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 457 (ET, 373).

[164] This is the only occurrence in Genesis of תוֹשָׁב, which appears overall only in P. Its use here does not necessarily add further nuance to the first term, גֵּר, although it may provide additional emphasis. When paired with גֵּר, the term תוֹשָׁב can have an identical meaning and it is thus possible to translate the two terms as a hendiadys, e.g. "sojourning alien." Alter, *Genesis*, 109; Cohn, "Negotiating," 159 and n. 37; Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 124, 128; Diether Kellermann, "גּוּר," in *ThWAT*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1973), 990 (ET Diether Kellermann, "גּוּר," in *TDOT*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1975], 448); Miller, 549 n. 1; Nahum M. Sarna, "Genesis Chapter 23: The Cave of Machpelah," *HS* 23 (1982): 18; Speiser, *Genesis*, 168, 170; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 127; Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 457 (ET, 373).

proposal he puts forward, that he acquire a land holding for burial.[165] Abraham states

he is a *sojourner/alien* and then he requests a *burial holding*; the parallel repetition of

the word עִמָּכֶם (among you) ending the two phrases in v. 4 places the two compound

nouns in juxtaposition:

גֵּר־וְתוֹשָׁב אָנֹכִי עִמָּכֶם   I am a sojourner-alien *with you*

תְּנוּ לִי אֲחֻזַּת־קֶבֶר עִמָּכֶם   give me a burial-holding *with you*

Thus גֵּר־וְתוֹשָׁב and אֲחֻזַּת־קֶבֶר are textual opposites; Abraham's *alien* status is the

explanation of his not owning a *property* to use for burial. The opposition is not only

a legal one, contrasting landless sojourn with formal land possession, but also a

symbolic one, depicting a transformation from impermanent presence in the land to a

rootedness that comes when ethnic memory (and specifically, ancestral burial) is

connected to a specific territorial location. These two aspects, legal and symbolic, are

encapsulated in the phrase "burial holding," אֲחֻזַּת־קֶבֶר. What Abraham requests is

first of all a holding (אֲחֻזָּה), a heritable plot of land held in perpetuity.[166] His request

for the formal ownership of a plot of land is specifically for a grave (קֶבֶר), however,

and not only for possession in general. The plot, when used for burial, will become a

repository of memory, a location suffused with the significance of an ethnic past,

embodied (as it were) in the ancestors buried there. Thus, Abraham's request is for

legal property to meet a functional need, but also for a significant symbolic

acquisition that will give him and his descendants a hold on the land that extends

beyond legality into the broad horizon of ethnic belonging. He is a sojourner; will the

natives allow him what he asks? The narrative maintains the suspense for the next 12

verses.

Abraham's request is fraught with significance both for himself and for his

audience, with dangers resulting on each side if the negotiation process is not

carefully balanced. In this exchange the key word carrying the symbolic charge of

boundary-crossing, with both its potential and its risk, is the verb "give," √נתן.[167]

The word occurs seven times in the dialogue, used four times by Abraham (vv. 4, 9

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[165] Amos, 131; Cohn, "Negotiating," 159; Davidson, 100; Dillmann, *Die Genesis*, 280 (ET, 153);
Driver, *Genesis*, 225; Hauge, "Struggles II," 137; Gunkel, *Genesis*, 275 (ET, 270); Kidner, 145; von
Rad, *Genesis*, 212 (ET, 242); Sarna, *Understanding*, 166-67; Scullion, 177; Speiser, *Genesis*, 170;
Vawter, 261; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 127.
[166] Alter, *Genesis*, 109; Dillmann, *Die Genesis*, 279 (ET, 152); Sarna, *Understanding*, 167; Wenham,
Genesis 16-50, 127.
[167] Compare the functions of hospitality and of kindness in the previous discussions of 19:9 and 21:23.

[x2], and 13) and three times by Ephron (v. 11). It is introduced here for the first time as the sole verb in Abraham's opening address (v. 4). *Giving* is the action, crossing the boundary between him and the Hittites, which Abraham requests; it is the action that will mediate the opposition between sojourn and landedness. The verb נתן√ bears a dual interpretation as "give" or "sell," and the dynamic interplay between the two meanings here provides a space for narrative artistry to play out.

Interpreters differ over which meaning of the verb is intended in each instance; the multiplicity of interpretations points to an ambiguity that is not easily resolved. Some argue that נתן√ means "sell" (or "pay") every time it is used throughout the chapter; it is simply a euphemism for buying and selling, and the language here simply reflects conventions of ancient oriental trading.[168] The absence of a double meaning here would indicate that there is no subtext to read, as what is said is what is meant (allowing for the slight gap of euphemism), and both Abraham and Ephron are presumably in accord throughout a straightforward purchase conversation. While the word "gift" may be used, then, a gift is never truly intended. Other interpreters allow for some ambiguity in Abraham's first use of the word (v. 4), but point to its resolution in v. 9 where Abraham pairs נתן√ with the explication "for the full price," בְּכֶסֶף מָלֵא.[169] Thus any suggestion that Abraham is asking for a gift in v. 4 is avoided by his correction/explanation in v. 9. It is also suggested that Ephron's use of the word (v. 11) contrasts with Abraham's, unequivocally signifying "give" and not "sell,"[170] although there is a range of opinions as to whether his offer of a "gift" was genuine or an empty formality.[171]

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[168] Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 195; Manfred R. Lehmann, "Abraham's Purchase of Machpelah and Hittite Law," *BASOR* 129 (1953): 16; Vawter, 264.

[169] Alter, *Genesis*, 109-10; Lipiński and Fabry, "נָתַן," 701 (ET, 97-98).

[170] Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 134; Gary Stansell, "The Gift in Ancient Israel," *Semeia* 87 (1999): 78-79.

[171] N. MacDonald analyzes this episode in light of anthropological studies of bazaar economies, and identifies Ephron's statement as a standard opening gambit in the haggling process characteristic of these settings. Coats, Driver, and Van Seters class the offer as polite overstatement; D. Kidner calls it a conventional fiction. Alter, Fretheim, and Scullion believe the offer is a maneuver designed to elicit an offer from Abraham, and von Rad similarly states that it is a gesture designed to obligate the buyer. J. Licht believes that the offer connotes a loan, in contrast to a sale that would formally transfer ownership. G. Stansell and Wenham leave the door open to the possibility that Ephron made a genuine offer. Nathan MacDonald, "Driving a Hard Bargain? Genesis 23 and Models of Economic Exchange," in *Anthropology and Biblical Studies: Avenues of Approach*, ed. Louise J. Lawrence and Mario I. Aguilar (Leiden: Deo, 2004), 89, 94; Coats, *Genesis*, 164-65; Driver, *Genesis*, 226; Van Seters, *Abraham*, 99; Kidner, 145-46; Alter, *Genesis*, 110; Fretheim, "Genesis," 504; Scullion, 178; von Rad, *Genesis*, 212 (ET, 243); Jacob Licht, *Storytelling in the Bible* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1978), 22; Stansell: 79; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 128.

M. Sternberg's sensitive reading of the Machpelah narrative suggests multiple layers of meaning in the interaction between Abraham and the Hittites.[172] Sternberg's title phrase "double talk" offers a valuable interpretive tool for the analysis here, although Sternberg's conclusions take his discussion in a different direction than the aims of this study. Sternberg reads a duality in the signification of the verb √נתן in both speeches of Abraham's. In the first speech (v. 4) Abraham is proposing a concrete sale, as becomes more fully apparent in his explication in v. 9, but at the same time, he uses the word "give" in both instances to signal that even a fair exchange of land for money is still a concession on the part of the Hittites, a favor extended by the landed citizens to the sojourning alien.[173] The verb √נתן with its double meaning is the perfect vehicle for what Abraham requests: the acquisition of land would be a *sale*, but the sale itself—when allowed to a sojourner such as himself—is in itself also a *gift*.

While Sternberg highlights double meanings primarily in the opening statements of the dialogue, the use of "double talk" is evident in the later uses of √נתן as well. Ephron's use of √נתן, three times in a single speech (v. 11), also allows for a dual interpretation. He offers the cave that Abraham has identified as a gift, but in the same breath (and adroitly preceding the "gift" of the cave) he offers the field surrounding the cave as a gift as well. The field was not part of Abraham's request; even as a gift it is not necessarily welcome. His offer rises to a crescendo in a third mention of his overall gift, this one encompassing the Hittite audience as witnesses to his grand gesture of magnanimity. The triple "gift" exerts great rhetorical pressure. Ephron's insistence raises doubt. This large gift, unasked for and highly public, surely comes with strings attached. What is the catch? What is the subsequent expectation? What, in short, is the cost*?* The interaction leans again in the direction of a *sale.* Perhaps Ephron is merely making the gesture of a gift, and underneath lies the full expectation of a monetary price to be paid. Or perhaps he is making a genuine offer of a gift, but underneath such a gift lies the expectation of a non-monetary price to be paid—the indebtedness of a sojourner to his benefactor, the

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[172] Meir Sternberg, "Double Cave, Double Talk: The Indirections of Biblical Dialogue," in *"Not in Heaven": Coherence and Complexity in Biblical Narrative*, ed. Jason P. Rosenblatt and Joseph C. Sitterson, Jr., Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 28-57.

[173] Ibid., 34, 40.

dependence of Abraham upon Ephron.[174] Perhaps Ephron is even keeping both these payment plans as concurrent options. In either case, however, Abraham will pay, for this "giving" of Ephron cleverly spans the range of the word's twin meanings. Ephron will claim for himself the public honor of magnanimity that comes with offering a gift, but he will accept also the costly payment of Abraham that follows upon a sale—be it a sale in exchange for money, or for the social capital of indebtedness.

Finally, there is Abraham's use of $\sqrt{}$נתן in his last speech of the exchange, "I will give the price of the field" (v. 13). Here too it is possible to detect dual signification. Abraham is responding to Ephron's offer of the cave and field as a gift. Abraham counters that he will "give" the full price, and although the word may be read simply as "pay," it is also possible to read here a suggestion from Abraham that he will, in his turn, give Ephron a gift. It is a payment, but it is also a suggestion of reciprocity, and a statement that Abraham, and not just Ephron, will claim the honor of generosity.[175] Ephron then names his price for the burial site; the price is high, perhaps even exorbitant.[176] When Abraham pays up without murmur, he "gives" to Ephron a substantial financial sum. This gift of Abraham's, the staggering four hundred shekels, is the first instance in the narrative where the verb $\sqrt{}$נתן relates to an action of Abraham's. While Ephron and the Hittites have been the magnanimous givers throughout the story, granting a hearing to a sojourner and bestowing privileges from their position of power, in the final act of the episode Abraham

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[174] Wenham notes, "…if Abraham accepted the cave and land as a free gift from Ephron, he could find himself indebted to him in other ways." Hamilton adds, "To receive the property for free could be an insidious way of the original proprietor retaining actual ownership of the land." Stansell believes that acceptance of Ephron's gift would have meant Abraham's submission to a client-patron relationship. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 128; Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 131; Stansell: 79.

[175] Sternberg notes that Abraham's use of the phrase "I have given" in v. 13, replicating Ephron's wording exactly, proposes a balance of honor with mutual give and take. He maintains, however, that Ephron rejects this offer of Abraham's. I interpret the arrival at a final agreement and Ephron's acceptance of Abraham's payment as an implicit acceptance of Abraham's "gift" language as well. See Sternberg, "Double Cave," 46-47.

[176] Alter, *Genesis*, 111; Amos, 132; Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 195; Cohn, "Negotiating," 160; Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 135; Scullion, 182; Speiser, *Genesis*, 171; Sternberg, "Double Cave," 47; Turner, *Genesis*, 101; Vawter, 264; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 130; Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 459 (ET, 375).

maintains his dignity and subtly rights the balance. [177] Abraham too, though a sojourner, has something to "give."[178]

What does the careful balancing of giving in this story achieve? Sternberg and Cohen each offer sensitive readings highlighting the danger Abraham faces in this story. Both scholars see Abraham successfully resisting the power of the Hittites to engulf him, transgress the boundaries of his identity, and obliterate his ethnic singularity. [179] Building on their interpretations, we may perceive that the "gift" the Hittites offer bears the price of boundary encroachment. Abraham, in his insistence on a sale, offers them as payment his silver instead of his allegiance. His skillful navigation of the dual significations of √נתן win him the prize of boundary preservation. The ethnic identity of Israel's forefather is left intact, because Abraham was able to keep the Other at arm's length. Ethnic identity, here, is primarily inscribed by the establishment of a boundary.

This interpretation may be augmented, however, by the insight gained from the observation that Abraham also offered a "gift" to the Hittites. Sternberg and Cohen see Abraham refusing a social framework of gift exchange and insisting instead on a market process of trade. The dialogue, however, maintains the language of gifting throughout, and at its conclusion Abraham uses the language of gift to describe his own action vis-à-vis Ephron. In one sense, Abraham refuses the proffered "gifts" of Ephron (v. 11) and the Hittites (v. 6)—he will not accept mere use of their land on their sufferance, and insists on legal ownership paid for in full. The lurking menace of gift exchange is here avoided. In another sense, however, Abraham affirms throughout that their sale of land to him is a gift, and in response to their goodwill offers a gift of his own, a handsome price paid for the plot he desires. The positive potential of gift exchange is here utilized. The action of √נתן crosses

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[177] G. B. Lester astutely observes that the high price that Abraham pays purchases for this sojourner, in addition to legally owned land, the public status of being "at home" in his upper-class mercantile setting. G. Brooke Lester, "Admiring our Savvy Ancestors: Abraham's and Jacob's Rhetoric of Negotiation (Gen 23, 33)," *Koinonia* 15 (2003): 88.

[178] J. Pedersen makes the striking comment that Abraham's unquestioning payment of the exorbitant price is designed to make him the primary giver of the narrative, "the one who had given most." Vawter argues that the text attributes Abraham's acquisition of the cave to his "munificent gesture." MacDonald believes the text is emphasizing the extravagant generosity of Abraham, and thus his honorable character, through his unquestioning payment of Ephron's high demand. Johannes Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture: Volume II*, ed. Jacob Neusner et al., South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism, vol. 29 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1991), 298; Vawter, 265; MacDonald, 93-94.

[179] Cohn, "Before," 84-86; Cohn, "Negotiating," 159-60; Sternberg, "Double Cave," 31-32. Sternberg observes that even the physical location of the cave, "at the edge of the field," illustrates Abraham's desire to remain withdrawn and separate from the Hittites. Sternberg, "Double Cave," 39-40.

and crisscrosses the border between the two parties, suggesting an ethic of interaction that transcends the simple drawing of boundaries.

The ambidextrous potential of √נתן provides a rich model of interaction that enfleshes the multivocal potential of sojourn. As a sojourner Abraham belongs and does not belong, owns no land yet must bury his dead in a plot that he owns, and needs the favor of the natives yet cannot become fully dependent upon it. To preserve the tension of his sojourn he utilizes the duality of √נתן to gain the holding he needs without ceding his independence. Ephron may √נתן the land as a gift, but Abraham will √נתן him money so that he owes him no reciprocal debt. Thus √נתן serves a negative role, maintaining distance, and Abraham preserves a sustainable balance in his sojourn presence among the Hittites. Yet what is at stake for Abraham in this story, ultimately, is not simply the preservation of a boundary with the Hittites. √נתן also serves a positive role. Abraham affirms that the land transaction is a gift to him, and that even as he pays the full price, Ephron and the Hittites √נתן the land. He also confirms, once gain in the context of paying the monetary price, that he also is performing √נתן. His sojourn means a √נתן that keeps him separate from the Other, but at the same time a √נתן that inscribes a reciprocal interaction with the Other. Gift-giving here contributes new depth to a sojourn ethic of interaction.

The gift-giving ethic proposed in this narrative is not a simple one. Abraham resists one type of gift, the expansive gesture of a burial place offered gratis. The Hittites press this model upon him twice, in their original offer of a burial place in general, and in Ephron's particular offer of the cave and the field of Machpelah. In his refusal of this first model of gifting, however, Abraham does not propose as his alternative a barren market exchange.[180] Rather, he couches the sale of the burial plot in repeated terminology of giving, both to describe the Hittites' and Ephron's action toward him in the sale of the land, and to describe his own action in paying the monetary price for it. The model held up in this narrative is one of dignified reciprocal exchange, not one-sided magnanimity with a hidden price of dependence. The exchange, however, is still framed as gift-giving, and is suffused with the language of virtue. Both sides have been magnanimous, yet neither side owes the

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[180] I disagree here with Stansell and MacDonald. Stansell argues that Abraham rejects the gift model, with its attendant obligations, in favor of a straightforward sale. MacDonald explains the whole episode by a model of "negative reciprocity," a framework of self-interested economic exchange operative in bazaar economies through standard processes of haggling. Stansell: 79; MacDonald, 94.

other anything—the relationship is both safe *and* warm. Abraham has adroitly gotten the best of both worlds.[181]

The gift ethic upheld in this narrative echoes that of ch. 21, where Abraham and Abimelech make a reciprocal covenant, and Abraham presents the king with a gift in exchange for rights to the well of Beer-sheba. A careful balance is struck in both these texts, one that establishes adequate distance from the native authorities, yet also affirms an ethic of virtuous interaction. Sojourn in Genesis involves a very carefully balanced mode of relationality, one in which some boundaries maintain identity, and yet other boundaries are meant to be crossed for this identity to have meaning and sustainability.

Abraham's rejection of the Hittites' first model of gifting is also reminiscent of another gifting scenario earlier in the narrative, his refusal of the king of Sodom's offer that he keep the spoils of his successful military campaign (14:17-24).[182] There Abraham gives a more explicit rationale for his refusal than is expressed at any point in ch. 23: he will not have the native king say he has made Abraham rich (12:23). His refusal of the spoil in 14:22-24 is juxtaposed with God's promise to Abraham immediately following,[183] a promise that begins with the statement that God will give (or be) a reward to Abraham (15:1), and repeatedly designates God as the source of giving, נתן√ (15:7, 18). In his speech to the king of Sodom, Abraham highlights the *source* of his wealth as significant, and raises a question for our text in ch. 23. Is Abraham rejecting the gift of the Hittites not only for the ethical/relational reasons outlined above, but also because of a concern that his acquisition be attributed to God, and not humans? In other words, does the narrative express a concern related to the divine promise, a perceived conflict between the Hittites's gift of land to Abraham and God's promise to give the land to him? Here the discussion turns to the question of this narrative's contribution to the ethnic myth of election. The narrative's first

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[181] I am indebted in this analysis to Hinnant's essay on gift-giving in the patriarchal narratives. Hinnant argues against a false dichotomy between two conventional models, commodity exchange (emotionally barren) and gift exchange (highly personal), suggesting instead that an intermediate model exists as a compromise solution that avoids the dangers of each extreme. Hinnant finds in the Machpelah narrative the proposal of such a model, mediating between the polarities of hospitality and hostility by emphasizing market processes while at the same time preserving the language of gift exchange. My study lends exegetical depth to Hinnant's brief treatment. Hinnant, 111-12.

[182] A number of scholars note this resonance. See Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 129; Pedersen, 298; Stansell: 70 n. 17; Sternberg, "Double Cave," 34.

[183] Amos, 86; Coats, *Genesis*, 123; Coote and Ord, 115-16; Davidson, 42; Fretheim, "Genesis," 444-45; Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 419; Sailhamer, 147; Sarna, *Understanding*, 121-22; Vawter, 207.

contribution to the ethnic myth, outlined above, was its depiction of a sojourn model of ethics that brings flexibility to the ethnic myth by providing for sustainable boundary-crossing interaction with the Other. Does the narrative also contribute, however, to the myth of ethnic origin, that is, the theme of divine election and promise?

B. Sojourn and the Gifting of the Land

The Machpelah narrative has sparked widely differing interpretations regarding its relation to the promise theme in Genesis. On the one hand are interpreters who view Abraham's acquisition of the Machpelah plot as an inauguration of the fulfillment of the divine promise of land, a "down payment," "guarantee," or "first fruits" that signals the more complete fulfillment in the future to come.[184] Here, Abraham's procuring the land from the Hittites is in harmony with God giving the land to Abraham. On the other hand are interpreters who perceive in this story a negative depiction of how far the land promise is from fulfillment at this point in the Genesis narrative.[185] That Abraham as yet owns no land, and has to undertake a challenging negotiation to acquire a mere burial plot, shows that God has not yet given the land. Here, acquiring land from the Hittites only demonstrates the absence of any land bestowal from God. A third interpretation holds that the story is completely unrelated to the land promise, and bears only upon the theme of burial and its attendant concepts and concerns.[186]

While in this text the theme of promise is perhaps "just beneath its surface," as Brueggemann observes, it nevertheless is present.[187] Several linguistic and thematic aspects of the story signal a connection to the overarching theme of divine promise that weaves through so much of the Genesis narrative. First, the word "holding," אֲחֻזָּה (vv. 4, 9, 20 and later in reference to the same plot of land in 49:30

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[184] Amos, 132-33; Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 196; Davidson, 101; Fretheim, "Genesis," 504-05; Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 135; Janzen, *Abraham*, 83-84; Vawter, 260-61; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 130.

[185] Davies, *Whose*, 106; Sternberg, "Double Cave," 53-57; Turner, *Genesis*, 101. A related interpretation holds that the purchase does not signal fulfillment of the promise, but does reveal Abraham's faith that it will be fulfilled in the future. See Calvin, 210; Delitzsch, *Neuer*, 335 (ET, 101); Kidner, 145; von Rad, *Genesis*, 214 (ET, 245).

[186] Jason S. Bray, "Genesis 23—A Priestly Paradigm for Burial," *JSOT* 60 (1993): 69-73; Coats, *Genesis*, 164-65; Gunkel, *Genesis*, 274 (ET, 269); Sarna, *Understanding*, 170; Van Seters, *Abraham*, 295; Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 460-61 (ET, 375-76).

[187] Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 196.

and 50:13) is the word used to describe the land of Canaan in some of the promise speeches (17:8; 48:4). Second, the phrase "the land of Canaan" (vv. 2, 19) begins and ends the narrative, emphasizing the location of the burial site in the land that is given to the patriarchs by divine promise (17:8; 48:3-4). Third, the word √נתן so central to this narrative (vv. 4, 9, 11, 13) is frequently used in the promise speeches to describe the action of God in giving the land to the patriarchs (12:7; 13:5, 17; 15:7, 18; 17:8; 24:7; 26:3-4; 28:4, 13; 35:12; 48:4). Finally, the mention of sojourn (v. 4) conjures the original migration of Abraham from his native land to an alien place in response to the divine promise of a new land, and echoes throughout the promise speeches as well (15:13; 17:8; 26:3; 28:4).[188] Thus the language of the text subtly but artfully connects this story to the ongoing reflection of the narrative on God's gift of the land. This connection counters the third interpretation mentioned above.

The narrative contains several clues that the events it reports relate to the promise. What is absent from the narrative, however, is a clear indication that the story indicates *fulfillment* of the promise. Both the first and second interpretation listed above, then, are still possible. The story alludes to the promise, but it is not clear whether the allusion is positive or negative. Here the previous discussions of the Hebrew words אֲחֻזַּת־קֶבֶר and √נתן provide further material for reflection.

When Abraham declines the Hittites' and Ephron's offer of the land as a gift, he avoids the relational dangers of dependence that would tip the delicate balance of sojourn into an asymmetrical situation of domination and dependence. Perhaps, however, he is also affirming the election myth, insisting that the land, if it will be a gift, can only be a gift from the deity. "Abraham buys a grave in Canaan; he buys and will not accept it as a gift, that he may not appear to take from man what God has promised to give him…"[189] If the giving of the Hittites is at odds with the divine gift, Abraham acts to maintain the myth of election. He insists on purchase, then, in part because the giving of the deity must be maintained. It is not mere land Abraham is after, but a sacred ethnoscape. The idea that the land must be clearly given by God, and not by humans, echoes the idea emphasized in Abraham's distancing of the king of Sodom in ch. 14.

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[188] Hauge analyzes the language of Abraham's request in light of the promise speeches in 17:8; 26:3, and 28:4 and concludes that "the formal character of 23:4 must be dependent on the Promise forms, directly alluding to the Land motif…" Hauge, "Struggles II," 139.

[189] Delitzsch, *Neuer*, 335 (ET, 101).

Abraham's insistence on purchase preserves the idea of the land as a divine gift, by distancing a possible role for the Hittites as the source of the gift. It also reveals, however, that the divine gift is not yet accomplished. If Abraham is holding out for a land gift from God, this burial plot is not it. Nowhere in the text is the act of giving, √נתן, attributed to God. The sojourner still awaits an act of God to grant him the land that is promised; this purchase is not portrayed as that gift. The attribution of √נתן to both Ephron and Abraham highlights the fact that God is not as yet performing any √נתן; God is not in this story giving any land to Abraham. Abraham remains a sojourner, waiting for the divine action that will bring him true belonging—possession granted by an appointment of God.[190] As Abraham sojourns and waits for the √נתן of God, he acts out the sojourn ethics of reciprocal √נתן exchange with the Other. This second type of √נתן is not the first, undesirable giving that threatens the election myth (a one-sided gift from Ephron or the Hittites), but reciprocal magnanimity (the favor of a land sale over against the favor of a generous price promptly paid), which works to strengthen ethnic identity as discussed above.

We return to the phrase אֲחֻזַּת־קֶבֶר. In Abraham's opening speech, the burial holding contrasts with his sojourn status. Does Abraham's ultimate acquisition of this holding, then, signal a diminishment of his sojourn? And does this mean the promise is beginning to be fulfilled? אֲחֻזָּה, like √נתן, is a word shared with the promise speeches. Like √נתן, however, its usage here is not explicitly related to an action of God's in this text, and thus only serves to highlight the continuing unfulfillment of the promise. The reference to burial, however, introduces a new dimension of meaning to the word. This particular holding (אֲחֻזָּה) will be used as a grave (קֶבֶר) for Sarah. Burying the matriarch at this site establishes it as a site of memory, a location of ethnic identification with the land. The tremendous significance of this location as a burial site is confirmed by repeated reference to burial here in the narrative (13 times, vv. 4 [x2], 6 [x4], 8, 9, 11, 13, 15, 19, and 20), and also by the return of the narrative to record subsequent burials at this site several times later in Genesis. Sarah's burial at this site is followed by the burials of Abraham, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, and Leah, all meticulously reported by the Genesis narrative (25:9, 49:29-32, 50:13).

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[190] I differ here with Brueggemann and Janzen, who claim that after his purchase Abraham is no longer a sojourner, and now "belongs" in the land. Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 196; Janzen, *Abraham*, 83.

Abraham may not have acquired the plot by an act of God clearly confirming the myth of election that designated the land as God's gift. He did, however, begin to inscribe ethnic memory in the plot. The act of burial strengthens ethnic identity according to Smith's second aspect of ethnic myth, the territorialization of memory. Abraham did not need to possess the land by an act of God, or to see clearly the fulfillment of the promise, in order to begin this process. The territorialization of memory is a process that can be achieved while sojourning. It is not full belonging, but it is a foundation for future belonging. Abraham buried Sarah as a sojourner, and as a sojourner confirmed that the land would one day be a gift of God to his ethnic descendants. Abraham interacted with the Hittites as a sojourner, and by the ethics of sojourn was able to buy the land he needed. His purchase did not alleviate his sojourn in the deepest symbolic sense; he still did not own the land in the way looked for by the ethnic myth, through clear divine gift. In his ongoing sojourn, however, Abraham continued to confirm the ethnic myth. First, he rejected human gifts of the land that were in conflict with the myth of election. Second, he began to inscribe ethnic memory in the land of his sojourn. Third, he interacted with the Other using an ethic that established a sustainable sojourn identity. In every aspect, the text contributes to a strong and flexible ethnic identity for Israel, the *ethnie* that looks to this story to ground both its past and its future.

Genesis 32:5[191]

Gen. 32:5 is the fourth sojourn reference occurring in the context of interaction between characters. As Jacob approaches Canaan, he sends a message to Esau stating that he has sojourned with Laban (עִם־לָבָן גַּרְתִּי) and that he now possesses great wealth, which he enumerates by categories of possessions. The message then reports that Jacob sends this news to Esau in order to find favor with him (32:6). The following analysis will focus on three aspects of this text: first, its position in the broader narrative structure; second, what the text reflects about Jacob's relationship to Laban; and third, what the text reflects about Jacob's relationship to Esau. The significance of sojourn is central for all three sections of the analysis, which will focus as before on the contribution made by this sojourn text

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[191] This discussion will follow the Hebrew verse numbering for Gen. 32. Many English translations start ch. 32 one verse later; verse references in these translations are one number less than the Hebrew.

toward the strengthening of ethnic identity.

A. 32:5 in the Structure of the Jacob Cycle

Many scholars have observed strong parallels between Jacob's encounter with angels at Mahanaim (32:2-3) and his vision of angels at Bethel (28:10-22).[192] The two episodes share several elements of language and style;[193] these formal elements serve to highlight the complementary position the two episodes occupy in the structure of the Jacob cycle as a whole. Fishbane's proposal of a chiastic structure for the overall Jacob cycle,[194] confirmed and further developed by several others,[195] positions ch. 28 in parallel with ch. 32.[196] The broad structure of the Jacob cycle, charted in the following diagram, shows the complementary position of the two encounters.[197]

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[192] Alter, *Genesis*, 177; Amos, 198; Coats, *Genesis*, 223; Davidson, 179-80; Delitzsch, *Neuer*, 410 (ET, 213); Dillmann, *Die Genesis*, 339 (ET, 270); Fretheim, "Genesis," 562; Fokkelman, 197-98; Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 317; Kidner, 167; Scullion, 229; Turner, *Genesis*, 138; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 267; Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 615-16 (ET, 505).

[193] The parallels are enumerated by C. Houtman, "Jacob at Mahanaim: Some Remarks on Genesis xxxii 2-3," *VT* 28, no. 1 (1978): 39; Fokkelman, 197-98; Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 317; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 281.

[194] Fishbane, "Composition," 20.

[195] See Amos, 160; Coats, *Genesis*, 177-78,180; John G. Gammie, "Theological Interpretation by Way of Literary and Tradition Analysis: Genesis 25-36," in *Encounter with the Text: Form and History in the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Martin J. Buss (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 121-22; Gary A. Rendsburg, *The Redaction of Genesis* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1986), 53-54; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 169. A loose chiastic structure is also proposed by Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 213, 249; Fokkelman, 237; Fretheim, "Genesis," 518, 552; Scullion, 194; Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 564-65 (ET, 463).

[196] Opinions differ as to whether the Mahanaim or Peniel scenes more closely parallel the Bethel encounter; yet another view holds that Jacob's arrival at Bethel in ch. 35 is the more precise equivalent. E.g., Fokkelman sees strong mirroring of Bethel at Peniel; Westermann emphasizes the similarities between the two episodes at Bethel; Wenham finds the closest verbal links to Bethel at Mahanaim. It is possible to allow for further resonances of ch. 28 later in the cycle and still emphasize the structural position of ch. 32 as its clear counterpart, as Fishbane does. See Fokkelman, 48; Westermann, *Verheißungen*, 86 (ET, 88); Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 289; Fishbane, "Composition," 29.

[197] My diagram relies on the work of the scholars above but differs in some of the textual divisions.

A	Birth of Jacob and Esau	25:19-27
	(Mother's life threatened; prediction about sons; naming formulas)	
B	Jacob acquires birthright of his brother[198]	25:29-34
	(Renunciation of birthright; bread and stew; Jacob acquires right of inheritance)	
C	Father's encounters with the natives	26:1-35
	(Possibility of sexual union with the natives; deceit; covenant with foreigners; perceived mortal danger)	
D	Conflict between Jacob and Esau	27:1-28:9
	(Blessing stolen; deceit; threat of violence introduced; separation of brothers)	
E	Departure from Canaan; divine encounter	28:10-22
	(Divine messengers; place named; promise given; hope for prosperity and return)	
F	New family bonds formed	29:1-14
	(Kiss of greeting; barrier stone removed; formula of kinship)	
G	Laban outwits Jacob	29:15-30
	(Wages negotiated; "Ewe" and "Cow" switched by a trick)	
H	Birth of Jacob's sons	29:31-30:24
	(Human devices and divine action intertwined)	
G′	Jacob outwits Laban[199]	30:25-43
	(Wages negotiated; flocks' colors switched by magic)	
F′	Family bonds reformulated[200]	31:1-32:1
	(Kiss of parting; boundary stone erected; formula of renunciation)	
E′	Return toward Canaan; divine encounters	32:2-32
	(Divine messengers; place named; promise cited; prosperity and return achieved)	
D′	Reconciliation between Jacob and Esau	33:1-17
	(Blessing returned; deceit; threat of violence resolved; separation of brothers)	
C′	Sons' encounter with the natives	33:18-34:31
	(Possibility of sexual union with the natives; deceit; covenant with foreigners; perceived mortal danger)	
B′	Jacob receives promise of his fathers	35:1-15
	(Renunciation of foreign gods; drink offering; Jacob receives promise of land inheritance)	
A′	Birth of Benjamin	35:16-21
	(Death of mother; prediction about son; naming formula)	
	Coda: List of sons; death of father; descendants of dis-elect brother; *toledoth* formula	35:22-37:2
	(Compare close parallels in the coda to the Abraham cycle, 25:1-19.)	

Three pertinent observations arise from an examination of our text's structural position in the Jacob cycle. First, the pairing of Bethel and Mahanaim frames chs. 29-31 between the two incidents as a distinct interlude set apart by its

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[198] Symmetry is not clearly evident between B and B′, although the element of Jacob's ascendancy/election is shared between the two episodes. B′ also serves to provide closure to several other themes introduced at other points in the Jacob cycle, notably the Bethel encounter in 28:10-22.

[199] S. Noegel documents the thematic and linguistic parallels between the two deception episodes *G* and *G′*. Scott B. Noegel, "Sex, Sticks, and the Trickster in Gen. 30:31-43," *JANES* 25 (1997): 14-16.

[200] Rachel and Leah's statement in 31:14-16 is a renunciation of their ties to Laban in favor of the family unit they now form with Jacob and their children; the agreement between Laban and Jacob solidifies the separation. Fokkelman, 162; Niditch, *Prelude*, 109-10; Janzen, *Abraham*, 121; Charles Mabee, "Jacob and Laban: The Structure of Judicial Proceedings (Genesis XXXI 25-42)," *VT* 30, no. 2 (1980): 198 n. 13, 205; Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 601 (ET, 492).

geographical location. The two mirror episodes thus function as boundary experiences, and the encounters with the divine occurring in both places underscore the transformative power of the transition Jacob makes as he crosses the border. Before ch. 28 and after ch. 32 Jacob is in Canaan; between the two framing chapters he is with Laban in his territory. Hendel has shown how Jacob's crossing of these geographical boundaries symbolizes a spiritual rite of passage that develops his character as a hero.[201] We will return to the content of Jacob's time in Paddan-aram. Now we note that Jacob, as he crosses the boundary back toward Canaan and his brother, sums up his experience outside of Canaan as an experience of sojourn (32:5).[202] This description serves, on the one hand, to demarcate Paddan-aram as not-home and Canaan as home, giving each location a value on the ideological map drawn by the text. This spatial function of sojourn receives detailed attention in the chapter on itinerary notices. On the other hand, however, sojourn in this text highlights what is most significant about the text lying within the textual framework Bethel-Mahanaim. Looking back on the time reported in chs. 29-31, Jacob sums it up as a period of sojourn. This means that Jacob's status as a temporary resident in a land he did not own was the essential aspect of his experience in Paddan-aram. The strategic placement of this summation as a bracket closing off the time in Paddan-aram means that it can function as an interpretive key unlocking the significance of the events in chs. 29-31.

The first observation, then, is that sojourn's structural position serves to characterize all of chs. 29-31 as first and foremost a sojourn experience. This interpretive framework will play a vital role in the second portion of this discussion below regarding Jacob's relationship with Laban. The second observation is that the pairing of ch. 32 with ch. 28 also sets up a framework of promise/fulfillment. In ch. 28 Jacob receives the divine promises of land, offspring, mediation of blessing, divine accompaniment, and return to Canaan (28:13-15). The chiastic structure of the cycle as a whole then centers attention on the turn in 29:31-30:24, where the birth of

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[201] Hendel, 63, 130-31.

[202] Hendel, in developing his persuasive comparison between Jacob and Moses' journeys away from home, fails to note the arresting fact that both heroes describe their periods of flight as *sojourn* in key speeches, Jacob in his first message to Esau after years of estrangement (32:5), and Moses in the naming formula for his son Gershom (Ex.2:22). See Ibid., 140.

Jacob's sons initiates the process of promise fulfillment.[203] After the structural pivot in ch. 30, Jacob immediately initiates his journey of return to Canaan (30:25). Jacob's fortunes continue to look up: he gains possessions and prospers, a turn of events he interprets as a sign of divine accompaniment (31:5-9; 31:42; 32:10). At Mahanaim Jacob sends a message to Esau in which he reports on the preceding period of inversions. He mentions that he has sojourned, and he details his newfound prosperity (32:5-6). This prosperity reflects the fulfillment of God's promises made at Bethel, setting chs. 28 and 32 in counterpart as records of promise and promise fulfillment. This observation, taken together with the first observation above, leads to the conclusion that Jacob's time of sojourn was distinctively a time of promise fulfillment. The bare-bones report on chs. 29-31 given in 32:5-6 establishes the twin elements of sojourn and prosperity. Is there a logical connection between the two? The answer lies in a closer look at chs. 29-31, which follows in section two below.

Third, the placement of Mahanaim at the structural hinge between Paddan-aram and Canaan means that it can function as an interpretive key to the significance of the events *following* it as well. Jacob's message reporting a time of sojourn and enrichment not only interprets the events of chs. 29-31, it also impacts the reconciliation with Esau which follows in ch. 33. How does sojourn (and the prosperity it has brought) play a role in the reconciliation of the brothers? The text of 32:5-6 reveals that Jacob, at least, believes both elements vital for transformation in the sibling relationship. Section three below will examine the connections between sojourn, wealth, and the reconciliation of the brothers.

B. Sojourn and Wealth in Jacob's Relationship with Laban

The association of sojourn with the acquisition of wealth strikes a familiar note in the patriarchal narratives. In the previous discussion of Gen. 21:23 a general pattern was traced in the three wife-sister episodes, all of which are explicitly flagged by the narrative as sojourn experiences. The pattern shares its broad features with the narrative of Jacob and Laban's interaction in chs. 29-31.[204] The first portion of the pattern, a "negative" interaction, comprises the following elements:

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[203] Fishbane calls this episode "the architectonic and motivational mid-point" of the narrative, and Coote and Ord call it "the structural centerpiece;" both authors note that after this point all the themes of the narrative are reversed. Fishbane, "Composition," 32; Coote and Ord, 156.

[204] Several commentators note broad parallels between the Jacob/Laban story and the narrative sequences under consideration. See Coote and Ord, 145; Hauge, "Struggles II," 118-20; Kidner, 165; Stephen K. Sherwood, *"Had God Not Been on My Side": An Examination of the Narrative Technique*

1) A barter or exchange between the native figure and the sojourner, after which the goods offered turn out to be not as they had appeared, and the sojourner is reproached by the native for deceit that is ethically condemnable. In the Jacob-Laban narrative this element first appears in an inverted form when Laban tricks Jacob on his wedding night, then is reversed in chs. 30-31 to more closely parallel the power dynamic of the wife-sister tales. The narrative sequence moves through the negotiation of an exchange (30:25-34), Jacob's manipulation of the flocks so that his end of the deal turns out to be other than it first appeared to Laban (30:37-42), and reproach from Laban and his sons (31:1-2).[205] A second deceit follows, in which Jacob departs from Laban surreptitiously taking his family and flocks,[206] and Laban confronts him with his deceit, this time using the formula of accusation repeated in the wife-sister tales, "What have you done?" (31:26; cf. 12:18; 20:9; 26:10).[207]

2) An end to the transaction between sojourner and native and the return of the sojourner's wife "undamaged." Jacob does not barter his wives' sexual availability (although there is a faint echo of the theme earlier in Laban's tender of his daughters as Jacob's wages), so this element is not apparent in chs. 29-31.

3) The enrichment of the patriarch by resources of the land where he sojourns.[208] In the wife-sister tales patriarchal wealth is portrayed either as a result of the trick (12:16; 21:14), or in conjunction with it but without a causal connection, attributed instead to the blessing of God (26:12-14).[209] In the Jacob-Laban narrative the text offers both rationales in tandem: Jacob's gains are reported as a result of his cunning breeding techniques in 30:43, and as result of God's intervention on his

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of the Story of Jacob and Laban; Genesis 29,1-32,2, European University Studies Series 23 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1990), 377; Turner, *Genesis*, 136.

[205] Niditch describes Jacob's use of magic to reverse his status as similar to the pattern of the wife-sister stories; Nicholas offers a similar analysis. Niditch, *Prelude*, 98; Nicholas, 91-92.

[206] Several commentators also note the density of language in ch. 31 describing Jacob's stealthy departure as deceit. Davidson, 174; Fishbane, "Composition," 30-31; Janzen, *Abraham*, 121-24; Turner, *Genesis*, 135; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 267.

[207] Niditch provides a structural analysis of this deceit along similar lines to the previous ones in Genesis, and Turner finds echoes of Abraham's deceptions in this episode. Niditch, *Prelude*, 115; Turner, *Genesis*, 136.

[208] Hauge identifies this repeated motif of acquisition and posits a necessary connection with the setting of the stories (a setting which I identify as sojourn but which he terms "Exile"). He terms the gaining of wives, sons, and wealth "the rewards of Exile." Hauge, "Struggles II," 119-20, 124-25.

[209] Divine intervention is also evident in the first two wife-sister stories, however, where God brings plagues on Pharaoh and his house (12:17) and speaks directly to Abimelech with a death threat (20:3). In all stories following this first pattern, human devices of deception interweave with divine action on behalf of the deceiver, so that the final result of gain for the trickster cannot be attributed entirely to one agent in exclusion of the other.

behalf in 31:5-12, 16.[210] In the second episode, the narrator and Laban both accuse Jacob of carrying off the wives and flocks by deceit (31:20; 31:26), but Jacob counters that his gains are due to God's siding with him against Laban (31:41-42).

4) A move by the patriarch to a location further from the local ruler's central habitation. In 12:19-20 Pharaoh's expulsion of Abraham is a hostile act resulting directly from Abraham's deceit; in 26:14-16 Abimelech's expulsion of Isaac is a result of increased antagonism after Isaac's wealth has increased and the Philistines have grown envious of him; in chs. 20-21 Abraham's movement away from Gerar is subtle and gradual, and its rationale unclear. In the Jacob-Laban narrative, Laban's antagonism toward Jacob grows, along with the envy of Laban's sons toward Jacob because of his increased wealth, which they regard as stolen from their father (31:1-2, 5). This disfavor and envy are cited as reasons for Jacob's departure from Paddan-aram, although God's command also motivates the flight (31:5, 13). The narrative records Jacob's departure in 31:18 with a sentence emphasizing that he took all that he had gained in Paddan-aram with him. The formula mirrors a similar notice regarding Abraham's departure from Egypt in 13:1. Like the summary in 32:5, these itinerary notices communicating the end of sojourn also emphasize the wealth gained during that period.

As noted previously, the agreement reached between Jacob and Laban also parallels the agreements following the wife-sister stories, thus completing the larger arc of comparison. This second "positive" sojourn scenario, however, is of lesser concern in this discussion, which focuses on the first scenario because of its prominent correlation of sojourn with material gain. The text of 32:5, with its terse association of these two elements, thus benefits from further investigation of the first scenario.

What does the acquisition of wealth in the first sojourn scenario reflect about the relationship of the patriarch to the native ruler/master? The stories which fit this scenario portray an asymmetrical power relationship, in which the sojourner resides

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[210] The difference between the two reports is often attributed to the coupling of sources, ch. 30 being attributed to J and ch. 31 to E; see especially Fretheim's argument for two differing portraits of Jacob in the narrative, but also Davidson, Dillmann, Driver, Gunkel, von Rad, Skinner, Speiser, and Vawter. In the final form of the text, however, the two rationales stand side-by-side. Fretheim, "Jacob," 430; Davidson, 168-69; Dillmann, *Die Genesis*, 330-31 (ET, 251-54); Driver, *Genesis*, 280; Gunkel, *Genesis*, 342 (ET, 332); von Rad, *Genesis*, 263-64 (ET, 297); Skinner, 394; Speiser, *Genesis*, 238, 249; Vawter, 334.

within the native figure's circle of power.[211] In order to acquire wealth for himself, the sojourner operates within a barter/commercial framework with the native ruler/master, but gains an upper hand by manipulation of the deal so that he gets more out of it than he would if the exchange were straightforward.[212] God's siding with the underdog sojourner, despite the patriarch's deceit (which is invariably condemned), helps bring about a final triumph.[213] Relationships with the native power figure are strained, however, and the sojourner ultimately moves away, driven away either by hostility resulting from the deceit perpetrated, or envy over the wealth he has gained. In sum, the relationship of the sojourner with the native ruler/master is antagonistic. The disempowered sojourner challenges the power of the native obliquely, using the device of deceit available to the marginalized. Divine intervention contributes to a swing in the power dynamic in favor of the sojourner.[214] His increase in power cannot be tolerated, and he is expelled, but the story has clarified a central point: God sides with the patriarchs, over and against the native powers.[215] The stories are nuanced by qualifications: the power figure is portrayed with sympathetic touches; the patriarch is shown to be behaving badly; the fallout of the events for the patriarch is not all good. The covenant stories following the deceit stories also show, perhaps, a "better way" of interaction with foreigners.[216] Still, however, the central thrust of the tales is clear: the patriarchs are God's elect; the

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[211] S.K. Sherwood argues that Jacob's status as a sojourner, or landless alien, was similar to that of an indentured servant, dependent upon Laban and not free to move about as he pleased. Several commentators note the predominance of vocabulary related to service in the Jacob-Laban narrative. Sherwood, 206, 211; Daube, *Exodus*, 62; Fokkelman, 126; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 234, 253.

[212] Nicholas, Niditch, Matthews, Miller, and N. Steinberg suggest a connection between marginal status in these stories and the use of trickster strategies. Nicholas, 51-59; Niditch, *Prelude*, 99; Matthews: 124; Miller, 553-54; Naomi Steinberg, "Israelite Tricksters, Their Analogues and Cross-cultural Study," *Semeia* 42 (1988): 1, 6.

[213] Language in the Jacob-Laban narrative emphasizes God's decisive action on behalf of Jacob; both he and his wives states that God "rescued," √נצל, Jacob's wealth from Laban and given it to them (31:9, 16). For commentary on the value judgment implied by the use of this word, see Janzen, *Abraham*, 121; Sherwood, 305; Turner, *Genesis*, 134-40; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 271.

[214] As Jacob points out in the impassioned climax of his speech at Gilead, if it had been up to Laban, Jacob would have left empty-handed; it is God on his side who has reversed the natural power dynamic so that Jacob now has acquired wealth (31:41-42). Brueggemann identifies Jacob's language as a "formula of inversion" used elsewhere in the HB to affirm the increase of God's chosen one. Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 257.

[215] Cf. Brueggemann's description of the Jacob-Laban story as "partisan lore" allowing the Israelites to laugh at their perennial antagonists, the Arameans. Ibid., 250.

[216] Amos, 122.

native powers are not.[217] Sojourn throws into relief all that the patriarchs do not have—no land, no power, no seed capital to get their business going—in order to drive home the essential point of the decisive power that is on their side.

Another parallel serves to accentuate the element of election in these tales. The wife-sister story in ch. 12 shows strong resonance with the exodus narrative, as discussed in the analysis of 12:10. Wenham points out that the wife-sister story in ch. 26 also uses vocabulary shared with the exodus when narrating Abimelech's expulsion of Isaac and his reason for the eviction.[218] Daube has also noted striking parallels between the Jacob-Laban narrative and the exodus.[219] In Genesis, the text that explicitly introduces the exodus theme is 15:13. This text, remarkably, distills the essence of the predicted exodus to three elements: sojourn, a power dynamic reversed, and material gain.[220] God is the agent that will bring about the overthrow of oppression and the resulting acquisition of wealth.[221] The previous discussion of 15:13 proposed that sojourn in this text heightens a sense of election for the descendants of Abraham, thus contributing to a strengthened ethnic identity. Here we see a larger network of echoes upon this pattern, including the wife-sister tales and the Jacob-Laban narrative culminating in 32:5, all expanding upon the same element: the election of Israel, as manifested in the overthrow of the native powers and the enrichment of the powerless-yet-powerful patriarch who is a marginal sojourner and yet the elect of God.

One further element, evident in the larger arc of these various sojourn stories, serves to further confirm the theme of election. Previous discussions of 20:1, 21:34, and 26:3 focused on the way in which the divine promises began to be fulfilled

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[217] Pappas argues that the theme of wealth acquisition despite adversity in the wife-sister stories underscores the special relationship of God with Israel in protecting its interests and overpowering its stronger opponents. Pappas: 44-48.

[218] Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 191.

[219] Daube, *Exodus*, 24-25, 61-72. Several other scholars have also noted linguistic and thematic elements in common between the two narratives. See Amos, 191, 193, 195; Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 258; Fokkelman, 156, 193-94; Fretheim, "Genesis," 555, 560; Sherwood, 255 n. 117, 338, 376-77; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 259-60, 271-73, 277-78, 283.

[220] The last theme, when it recurs in the exodus narrative itself, is often referred to as "the plundering of the Egyptians." Coats notes that the account of the plundering in Exodus intertwines the double rationale of human deception and of God's deed establishing favor with the Egyptians on the Israelites' behalf, a mingling that resonates with the discussion above regarding the procurement of wealth in the sojourn scenarios of Genesis. George W. Coats, "Despoiling the Egyptians," *VT* 18, no. 4 (1968): 453-54.

[221] In both 15:14 and 31:18 the wealth taken away from the sojourn experience is described with the term רְכוּשׁ, "movable property."

within the framework of patriarchal sojourn. The birth of Isaac in ch. 21 and the manifold success of the adult Isaac in ch. 26 both show the promises of God for progeny, blessing, divine accompaniment, and rootedness in the land finding their fulfillment in the lives of the patriarchs even as they sojourn in a land not theirs. Jacob, too, experiences the fulfillment of God's promise to accompany him (given in 28:15 and 31:3) during his period of sojourn (31:5, 42). The text clearly positions the births of his children during his period of sojourn, as it did for the birth of Isaac, Abraham's long-awaited son of the promise.[222] The many children are a generous start in the direction of the multitudinous offspring promised to Jacob at Bethel (28:14).[223] The birth narrative emphasizes God's work in enabling the births (29:31-30:24),[224] and later Jacob describes the children as gifts of God (33:5). Jacob's expansion of property is reported in 30:43 in language that echoes the Bethel promise (√פרץ, 28:14),[225] and Laban and Jacob both state that God has blessed Laban because of Jacob (30:27, 30), a hint at the blessing Jacob is promised he will mediate to others in 28:14. As he returns from sojourn (32:10-13), Jacob attributes his expansion from a lone figure to two camps—i.e., his acquisition of both family and flocks—to God's action in fulfilling the promises given to him at Bethel (28:13-15) and in Paddan-aram (31:1).[226] The gains portrayed as fulfilled promises in these stories[227] overlap with and augment the profits wrested by the patriarchs from the natives via deceit. Both, however, are a benefit associated with sojourn. The wealth gained by deceit is portrayed as a profit gained against the odds of the asymmetrical power dynamic of sojourn. The gains acquired as fulfillments of the promises also

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[222] The timing of the children's birth is highlighted by its structural position at the central turning-point of the Jacob narrative. It seems important to the development of the narrative that the children are born where and when they are, to the point that numeric logic is strained to achieve the report that they were all born before Jacob left Paddan-aram.

[223] Benjamin is the only one of Jacob's children born in Canaan and not technically during Jacob's sojourn, although the text portrays the birth as taking place en route to the location of final closure for the Jacob narrative, Hebron (35:27), and thus it is also a birth "away" from home.

[224] See Brueggemann's sensitive explication of this theme; Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 254-55.

[225] Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 284; Sherwood, 241; Turner, *Genesis*, 133; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 255, 258.

[226] In this speech Jacob substitutes "do you good" for the promise of divine accompaniment in his quotations from both promises in chs. 28 and 31; thus Jacob understands divine accompaniment as the provision of safety and success. His speeches to his wives and to Laban also reveal his belief that the divine championing of his cause translates directly into acquisition of wealth (31:5-13, 42). The statements contribute to a broad statement communicated by chs. 29 -32 that Jacob's material success and family expansion signal the fulfillment of God's promises to him. See Alter, *Genesis*, 197; Amos, 200; Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 323.

[227] See Wenham's similar summation of promises fulfilled in the Jacob-Laban narrative; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 258-60.

exhibit an ironic reversal; this inversion is the granting of God's promised blessings even in the midst of a delay in one aspect of those same promises—that is, the postponed possession of the land, or in a word, sojourn. Both these ironies of patriarchal flourishing in sojourn point to the divine promises as the power fuelling the positive side of the irony. These promises, Smith's central "myth of election," are dramatically accentuated by the framework of sojourn in which the narrative so artfully places them.

C. Sojourn and Wealth in Jacob's Relationship with Esau

Jacob's message to Esau in 32:5-6 relays the facts of his sojourn and his wealth, then states that Jacob sends this information to Esau in order to find favor (חֵן) with him. The word "favor," חֵן, communicates the positive relational dynamic that Jacob desires to establish with Esau in place of the former hostility.[228] The noun חֵן and its related verb √חנן occur six times throughout chs. 32 and 33 (חֵן: 32:6; 33:8, 10, 15; √חנן: 33:5, 11). All six uses relate the establishment of favor in a relationship with the giving or receiving of a gift or service. The word play between the Hebrew words "favor," חנן/חֵן, and "gift," מִנְחָה (32:14, 19, 21, 22; 33:10), further strengthens the connection between the two concepts.[229] The repeated theme of gifts establishing favor links the unfolding events in chs. 32-33 with the message Jacob sends to Esau, forming an interconnected narrative that develops the idea first presented in 32:5-6.

In Jacob's first message to Esau in 32:5-6, he lists the gains he has acquired during his sojourn and sends the news of them to Esau, hoping the information will win him *favor* with his brother. It is not entirely clear at this point how the list of

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[228] W.L. Reed states that חֵן connotes "good will," and D.N. Freedman, J.R. Lundbom, and H.-J. Fabry define it as a "positive disposition one person has toward another," explaining, "…it can refer to ordinary acceptance or kindness, or else favor of a special nature, such as pity, mercy, or generosity. In the latter case, the usual limits established by law or custom are transcended." They also note that the word is often used in situations presupposing a former alienation. William L. Reed, "Some Implications of Hēn for Old Testament Religion," *JBL* 73, no. 1 (1954): 36; D.N. Freedman, J.R. Lundbom, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, "חָנַן," in *ThWAT*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1982), 24-26 (ET D.N. Freedman, J.R. Lundbom, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, "חָנַן," in *TDOT*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1986], 23-24).

[229] The Hebrew word for "camp," מַחֲנֶה (32:3, 8, 9, 11, 22; 33:8), and the place name "Mahanaim," or "two camps," מַחֲנָיִם (32:3), also form an anagram with the word "gift," creating further interconnections throughout the narrative of chs. 32-33. For commentary on these intertwining wordplays in the narrative see Amos, 199-200, 207; Fokkelman, 199-205; Gunkel, *Genesis*, 355-56 (ET, 344-45); Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 345; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 289.

possessions will accomplish the goal of an improved relationship with Esau.[230] What Jacob has in mind becomes clearer in a second speech, however, when Jacob sends sizable gifts from the various categories of animal to Esau. The narrative records Jacob's inner thoughts on his rationale for the gifts: he hopes they will appease Esau, and he will accept Jacob (32:21).[231] When the brothers meet in ch. 33, Jacob references God's *favor* to him twice in granting him children (v. 5) and possessions (v. 11). From these possessions he has selected the gifts he presents to Esau, which he presses on him, asking that Esau accept the gifts as a sign that he regards Jacob with *favor* (vv. 8, 10). Finally, Esau offers an escort to Jacob when they part, and Jacob (while refusing the offer) describes it as a sign of Esau's *favor* to him (v. 15).

Jacob interprets what he receives from God and from Esau respectively as signs of favor toward him. These statements are made after the fact of the gift in both situations. The urgency driving the narrative, however, relates to the hoped-for effect of Jacob's gifts upon Esau. Jacob hopes that these gifts will cause Esau to regard him with favor, and he urges Esau to accept them so this favor will be in evidence. The favor he seeks stands as the counterpart to the hostility expected; the narrative of ch. 33 is concerned with the resolution of the conflict set up in ch. 27. The narrative does not provide the private access to Esau's inner thoughts that it does to Jacob's (32:8-9, 21), so the reader cannot tell what it is that effects the resolution of the conflict from Esau's point of view. From Jacob's perspective, however, his gifts to Esau are central to the reconciliation. Jacob makes a striking final reference to his gift as "my blessing" (בִּרְכָתִי) in 33:11, echoing "my blessing" (בִּרְכָתִי) in 27:36, which had been Esau's, but which Jacob stole.[232] Several commentators point to this reference

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[230] For a colorful variety of extrapolations from Jacob's initial speech see Calvin, 270; Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 321; Janzen, *Abraham*, 127; Pedersen, 299; Rashi, 155; von Rad, *Genesis*, 277 (ET, 312); Turner, *Genesis*, 139; Vawter, 345.

[231] The Hebrew phrases translated "appease" and "accept," אֲכַפְּרָה פָנָיו and יִשָּׂא פָנָי, use a play on the word "face" in another linguistic motif that recurs at the meeting of the brothers and ties together chs. 32 and 33. Freedman, Lundbom, and Fabry elucidate the connection between "favor" and "face," both important words in this narrative. Freedman, Lundbom, and Fabry, "חָנַן," 26 (ET, 24).

[232] Another element in ch. 33 which reverses ch. 27 is the inversion of the power relationship predicted in 25:23 and 27:29. Jacob repeatedly calls Esau "my lord" (32:5, 6, 19; 33:8, 13, 14 [x2], 15) and himself Esau's servant (32:5, 19, 21; 33:5, 14), and bows down before him seven times at their meeting (33:3). See commentary on this reversal in Clare Amos, "The Genesis of Reconciliation: The Reconciliation of Genesis," *Mission Studies* 23, no. 1 (2006): 21; Alter, *Genesis*, 178; Amos, *Genesis*, 199, 201; Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 271; Fokkelman, 200, 223; Fretheim, "Genesis," 563, 572; Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 343; Turner, *Genesis*, 140-41; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 288, 290; Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 618 (ET, 507).

in 33:11 as the structural counterpart to the theft of the blessing in ch. 27; here Jacob returns the stolen blessing to Esau in the form of a symbolic (although handsome) gift, and thus effects the resolution of their conflict.[233]

The resonance of the blessing reference with ch. 27 may explain the significance of Jacob's gift, and give a reason why the encounter in ch. 33 can stand as a resolution to the conflict in ch. 27. The importance of gifts also resonates, however, with other sojourn scenes in the patriarchal narratives. Previous discussions of both 21:23 and 23:4 showed how gift-giving mediated hostility between parties, functioning as a boundary-crossing virtue in a situation where boundaries needed to be simultaneously both firm and porous. Here we can see Jacob's gifts performing a similar function.[234] On the one hand, a certain amount of distance pertains between Jacob and Esau: Jacob does not wish to receive the offer of an escort from Esau (33:15), and he resists the suggestion that the brothers travel on together (33:12-17), employing a measure of dissemblance that reinstates a lack of transparency in the relationship.[235] The separation of the brothers reestablishes a clear boundary between the two of them, and between their lands and families.[236] On the other hand, however,

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[233] Alter, *Genesis*, 186; Blenkinsopp, 153; Fishbane, "Composition," 27-28; Fokkelman, 227; Fretheim, "Genesis," 572; Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 346; Hendel, 130; Heard, 130; Scullion, 236; Turner, *Genesis*, 144; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 288, 291, 298; Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 622, 641, 646-47 (ET, 510, 526, 530).

[234] Matthews sees in this episode only the payment of "compensatory damages," erasing Jacob's debt to Esau and resulting in a zero-sum finale. Hinnant, however, maintains that gift-giving establishes a bond that is similar to that of kinship, and that stands in contrast to the commodity exchange of market transactions. Here in the tale of Jacob and Esau, the gift re-establishes a kinship bond that had previously deteriorated into a market relationship through Jacob's hard bargaining for the birthright, in which he cheated Esau by offering him a non-equivalent commodity. Victor H. Matthews, "The Unwanted Gift: Implications of Obligatory Gift Giving in Ancient Israel," *Semeia* 87 (1999): 98; Hinnant, 108, 112-13.

[235] Opinions differ as to whether Jacob acted deceitfully or not in this dialogue. Some scholars view the conversation as merely a polite way of couching the desire to separate; others see Jacob's remarks as disingenuous, with a range of evaluations for the motives behind the dissemblance. For the former, see Alter, *Genesis*, 187; Janzen, *Abraham*, 134; Lester: 91-93; Scullion, 236; Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 641-42 (ET, 526-27). For the latter, see Amos, *Genesis*, 208; Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 272; Delitzsch, *Neuer*, 408 (ET, 211); Gunkel, *Genesis*, 367 (ET, 355); Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 347-48; Heard, 130-31; Kidner, 171; Pedersen, 300-02; Turner, *Genesis*, 146; Vawter, 353; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 299, 304.

[236] Opinions differ as to whether the separation of the brothers is constructive or expressive of a continued rift between them. E.g., Janzen deems the separation a wise way to live apart yet on good terms; Coats sees Jacob rejecting the full reconciliation Esau offers; Fretheim believes the brothers settle past differences but refuse to share a future. Janzen, *Abraham*, 134; Coats, *Genesis*, 227; George W. Coats, "Strife and Reconciliation: Themes of a Biblical Theology in the Book of Genesis," *HBT* 2 (1980): 27-29; Fretheim, "Genesis," 571. For further positive evaluations of the separation, see Delitzsch, *Neuer*, 408 (ET, 211); Driver, *Genesis*, 299; Kidner, 171; Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 641-42 (ET, 526-27). For further negative evaluations, see Hinnant, 108; von Rad, *Genesis*, 286 (ET, 323).

the gifts given by Jacob and received by Esau have signaled favor, a positive cast to their relationship. This favor is now the operative descriptor of the connection between Jacob and Esau. The favor bridges the boundary between the two entities, who maintain their distance from one another, but exchange favor and gifts across the gap.[237] The brothers do not travel together, but the gifts of Jacob go with Esau as he departs, and Jacob journeys on in possession of Esau's favor. There is a way forward that maintains the tension between separateness and apartness.[238]

What is the role of sojourn in the relationship between Jacob and Esau? Jacob's sojourn with Laban, mentioned in 32:5, is part of the reason the brothers are able to reconcile again. Jacob's time away from home may have helped to heal the wounds of the old enmity between the brothers. Their distance then, just like their renewed distance after their reconciliation, may serve to maintain the separateness the two brothers/nations needed in order for both to survive. More directly, however, Jacob's sojourn brings him to a position of wealth, which he then uses in the process of reconciliation with Esau. His wealth brings him to a place where he can say "I have everything" (33:11), in contrast with his earlier grasping for the blessing, and to acknowledge that God has been gracious in provision for him (33:5, 11), in contrast with his earlier self-reliance.[239] This is turn enables his generosity to Esau and the symbolic return of the blessing. Sojourn, then, has made Jacob richer both materially and spiritually. The adversity he experienced as a sojourner with Laban highlighted God's provision and assistance for him—the dynamic of election discussed above. Now secure in this election, signaled by his growth in wealth, Jacob is able to give both wealth and blessing away. Sojourn has enabled a mode of positive relationship for the brothers: adequate distance, with virtue crossing the boundaries to establish exchange.

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[237] Fretheim further observes that the later coming together of the two brothers for their father's burial in 35:29 is a sharing of responsibility which shows their relationship is separate, but not without cooperation. Fretheim, "Genesis," 573.

[238] R. Syrén compares this text with the attitudes toward Esau/Edom in Numbers 20, Deuteronomy 2, and a number of prophetic texts. He finds that Gen. 32-33 holds a moderate line in comparison with these texts, "endorsing an attitude of integration and reserved openness." Roger Syrén, *The Forsaken First-Born: A Study of a Recurrent Motif in the Patriarchal Narratives*, JSOTSup 133 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 106-21.

[239] God receives no mention as a champion of Jacob's cause during his pursuit of birthright and blessing in chs. 25-27), in contrast to the later narrative focus on this theme. J. Blenkinsopp notes an exception that proves the rule, Jacob's false claim in 27:20 of God-given success in hunting game; see Blenkinsopp, 153.

This function of sojourn is reminiscent of its function in the previous texts discussed in this chapter. A second look at the Jacob cycle in comparison with these texts reveals that Jacob's relationship with Esau follows the broad contours of the two sojourn models outlined earlier.[240] An initial negative encounter encompasses deceit, enrichment for the underdog, and flight (ch. 27). A second amicable meeting follows with various shared components.[241]

   1) The patriarch moves closer to Canaan (ch. 32).

   2) A negotiation over land or habitation occurs (33:12-15).[242]

   3) The two sides reach a commitment that is reciprocal[243] (both say "I have," 33:9, 11; Jacob gives gifts and Esau grants favor[244]), references past dealings ("my blessing," 33:11), and includes ethical vocabulary of relational virtue ("favor," 33:10, 11).[245]

   4) The other party departs (33:16).[246]

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[240] Niditch finds a parallel in the structure of trickery and change of status between ch. 12 and ch. 27. Niditch, *Prelude*, 100.

[241] Hauge's analysis sketches a broad schematic pattern that highlights similar shared motifs between the three wife-sister stories and Jacob's story of estrangement and return (he also includes Joseph and Moses in this pattern). Hauge's observations overlap with my own on several points, although he focuses on motifs rather than linear plot development, and his exegesis is less detailed. His conflation of exile, estrangement, and sojourn reduces the value of his conclusions for the study of sojourn in particular, but his insightful delineation of broad narrative schema remains a valuable contribution supporting the patterns proposed in this study. See Hauge, "Struggles II," 131-33.

[242] Coote and Ord observe a broad similarity between the agreements struck by Isaac and Abimelech, Jacob and Laban, and Jacob and Esau. Coote and Ord, 160.

[243] Previous discussion of texts in this pattern has also emphasized the element of parity in power between the two parties. Here the brothers are in a sense "equals," and yet Jacob's use of lord/servant language (noted above) suggests an asymmetry. D.J. Reimer, however, finds this language characteristic of scenes in the Hebrew Bible where interpersonal forgiveness is sought. The language here may then suggest power that comes from Esau's entitlement to choose vengeance, rather than a real discrepancy of rank. See David J. Reimer, "Stories of Forgiveness: Narrative Ethics and the Old Testament," in *Reflection and Refraction: Studies in Biblical Historiography in Honour of A. Graeme Auld*, ed. Robert Rezetko, Timothy H. Lim, and W. Brian Aucker, VTSup (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 363, 367-68, 377.

[244] See Freedman, Lundbom, and Fabry's discussion on the concept of favor as a gift. Freedman, Lundbom, and Fabry, "חָנַן," 27-28 (ET, 25-26).

[245] The virtue of חֶסֶד upheld in the earlier episode is conceptually connected to the virtue of חֵן used here; see Reed: 36-41.

[246] Janzen, P.D. Miscall, and Westermann draw a parallel between the separation of Jacob and Esau and the separation of Abraham and Lot in ch. 13. Fretheim, Coote, and Ord see similarity between these two separations and that of Isaac and Abimelech as well. Petersen compares the three separations, portraying them all as nonviolent solutions to family conflict. Coats details structural parallels between the separation of Jacob and Laban and that of Jacob and Esau, but maintains that they both reflect alienation. Hauge offers a broad analysis of the motif of separation between kin throughout Genesis, offering rich observation on its relationship to election and the land promise. Janzen, *Abraham*, 134; Peter D. Miscall, "The Jacob and Joseph Stories as Analogies," *JSOT* 6 (1978): 36; Westermann, *Genesis: 2*, 145 (ET, 127); Fretheim, "Genesis," 432-33; Coote and Ord, 145; David

5) The patriarch establishes his presence in the area by symbolic action signaling promise fulfillment and rootedness in the land (33:17-20).[247]

The conspicuous difference between this series of events and those discussed earlier, however, is that Jacob does not sojourn with Esau, while in the earlier texts sojourn describes the relationship of the patriarch to the other power figure. It is Jacob's sojourn with Laban, rather, that intervenes between the two encounters of the brothers, and transforms their relational framework into one that can succeed.

Esau is not a foreigner with whom the Israelite patriarch sojourns; he is kin. Esau is the dis-elect brother, however, and Jacob's pattern of interaction with him follows the patterns sketched by the patriarchs in their interactions with those outside the ethnic group with whom they sojourned. It must be noted, however, that even those earlier incidents included an episode with Lot (13:2-18), and a larger interaction with Laban (chs. 29-31), both of whom were kin but not elect. Sojourn operated in those interactions to highlight the election of the patriarch in contradistinction from his dis-elect kin, who is set in parallel with the native rulers over and against the elect patriarch. Here in 32:5 as well with Jacob and Esau, sojourn accentuates Jacob's election and Esau's dis-election, even when Jacob's sojourn itself was elsewhere.

In sum, the sojourn reference in 32:5, functioning within the narrative of chs. 32-33 as well as the broader arc of the Jacob cycle, highlights the election of Jacob in contrast with both his uncle, representing the Arameans, and his brother, representing the Edomites. In this way sojourn functions to buttress the ethnic myth of election, and thus to strengthen Israelite identity. Sojourn in this text also frames and enables another example of positive interaction with the other, in which boundaries are maintained by suitable distance allowing territorial integrity to the *ethnie*, but interaction across the boundary with other ethnic groupings is held up as a virtue for emulation. This ethic of controlled relationality across ethnic boundaries introduces flexibility and adaptability to the ethnic myth, thus contributing to its ultimate strength and durability.

L. Petersen, "Shaking the World of Family Values," in *Shaking Heaven and Earth*, ed. Christine Roy Yoder et al. (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2005), 27-31; George W. Coats, "Strife without Reconciliation: A Narrative Theme in the Jacob Tradition," in *Werden und Wirken des Alten Testaments: Festschrift für Claus Westermann zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Rainer Albertz et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980), 91, 103; Hauge, "Struggles I," 14-21.
[247] For commentary on these verses as a signal of promise fulfillment see Amos, *Genesis*, 208-09; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 300.

Genesis 47: 4, 9

The final scene to consider encompasses three references to sojourn, one in 47:4 and two in 47:9. Once again the ancestors of Israel are interacting with a foreign king. All three references occur on the lips of the Israelite party in the dialogue: v. 4 in the speech of the five brothers whom Joseph chooses to appear before Pharaoh, and v. 9 in the words of Jacob to Pharaoh during his own audience with him. The analysis below will attend to each scene in turn.

A. Joseph's Brothers Request Permission to Sojourn

Repetition (or doubling) is an artistic device used throughout the Joseph narrative.[248] Here in the story of Joseph's family appearing before Pharaoh, repetition with or without variation is used to highlight specific elements of the dialogue. The sojourn reference in v. 4 occurs amidst several layers of interwoven repetition between Joseph's plans about what to say to Pharaoh on the one hand and the actual speeches given during the audience on the other. The sequence begins in 46:31 and can be plotted as a five-part double panel (see diagram on following page.)

The careful structuring of parallels in this text serves to spotlight the elements of divergence where the report of the audience with Pharaoh differs from the pre-planned script. The points where the second half of the text strays from its twin in the first half have generated a variety of interpretations, with no real consensus emerging as to the salient dynamics of the scene. A brief survey of these points of divergence and how they have been interpreted illustrates the diversity of commentary on this text.

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[248] For discussions of this technique in the Joseph narrative see Alter, *Art*, 107-112; W. Lee Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family: A Literary Study*, Studies on Personalities of the Old Testament (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), 93-99; Westermann, *Genesis: 3*, 280-82 (ET, 246-47).

Joseph's plans for the audience with Pharaoh

A Joseph will tell Pharaoh that his brothers: 46:31-32
   (1) have come from Canaan (2) are shepherds (3) are keepers of livestock (4) have
      brought their flocks and possessions

B Pharaoh will ask the brothers about their occupation   46:33

C The brothers will tell Pharaoh that they: 46:34
   (1) are keepers of livestock (2) from their youth to the present (3) as were their ancestors

D The outcome will be: 46:34
   (1) the brothers will settle in Goshen

E The rationale is: 46:34
   (2) shepherds are abhorrent to the Egyptians

The actual audience with Pharaoh

A′ Joseph tells Pharaoh that his brothers: 47:1
   (1) have come from Canaan (2) are now in Goshen (3) have brought their flocks and
      possessions

B′ Pharaoh asks the brothers about their occupation   47:3

C′ The brothers tell Pharaoh that they: 47:3
   (1) are shepherds (2) as were their ancestors

C″ The brothers also tell Pharaoh: 47:4
   (1) they have come to sojourn (2) from Canaan (3) where there is famine and no
      pasture for flocks (4) they ask to settle in Goshen

D′ The outcome is:[249]   47:6
   (1) Joseph is commanded to settle the brothers in Goshen (2) the brothers may
      oversee Pharaoh's livestock

E′ The rationale is: 47:6
   (2) Goshen is the best part of the land

A′: Joseph omits both references to his brothers' occupations, although he may refer to them obliquely in his mention of the flocks they have brought with them.[250] The omission of a reference to shepherding may be because of the social

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[249] The text of LXX expands 47:5 preceding Pharaoh's speech, but the difference between MT and LXX does not affect the discussion here. For a sampling of two contrasting opinions regarding the preferred text see Westermann, *Genesis: 3*, 185, 188 (ET, 166, 169); Horst Seebass, "The Joseph Story, Genesis 48 and the Canonical Process," *JSOT* 35 (1986): 42 n. 30.

[250] The mention of the flocks and possessions is repeated between *A* and *A′*, indicating execution according to plan. It raises a further question, however, by comparison of this text with the original invitations of Joseph (45:9-13) and of Pharaoh (45:17-20). This second, larger repetition structure provides interesting points for comparison with the audience in chs. 46-7, but space constraints limit a full investigation here. At this point we may simply note that bringing their flocks and all their possessions corresponds with the invitation of Joseph, but contradicts the invitation of Pharaoh. Perhaps there is a struggle reflected here over levels of dependence and indebtedness of the sojourning family, an echo of a dynamic touched on previously in Abraham's negotiation for Machpelah in ch. 23 and his refusal of the King of Sodom's offer in ch. 14. Alternatively, A. Wildavsky perceives the belongings as tokens of identity showing resistance of the family to an Egyptianization process. Wenham, however, sees Joseph and Pharaoh expressing the same underlying concern in ch. 45; i.e. that the possessions will be an obstacle to Jacob's household making the move to Egypt. See Aaron

stigma mentioned in *E*. The omission of a reference to livestock keeping may be for the same reason, or alternatively, because Joseph's unstated goal is to secure for his brothers a position overseeing the royal livestock (as actually occurs in *D′*), and he believes indirect suggestion to be the best method of bringing Pharaoh to this decision. Joseph's mention of Goshen here may also serve an indirect strategy of suggestion, planting a hint at the outcome desired in *D*.[251]

B′: No divergence.

C′: The brothers describe their occupation as shepherding rather than livestock keeping. This may be a gaffe on their part, destroying the careful wording Joseph suggested in *C*, which was motivated by his knowledge of *E*.[252] Alternatively, it may be simply the substitution of a synonym, with no implied contradiction to *C*.[253] In *D′* Pharaoh offers the brothers an appointment as royal livestock keepers despite there being no mention of this occupation in the dialogue.

C″: The brothers add an entirely unplanned speech to Pharaoh. In it they directly ask Pharaoh to allow them to settle in Goshen, an element Joseph had planned as an outcome in *D*, but had not scripted as part of the speech they were to deliver. Here the brothers may be stating in words what is better left unsaid, if Joseph's script is taken to be a careful maneuver designed to bring Pharaoh to a decision that appears to be his own (though fulfilling Joseph's wishes). The rest of their addition states the brother's goal and motivation explicitly: they have come to sojourn (לָגוּר) in the land, and this is because famine has forced them out of Canaan. The additions may be an awkward outburst, excessive chattiness that endangers Joseph's carefully wrought plans for subtle manipulation of the Pharaoh rather than blunt appeal.[254] Alternatively, the brothers may simply be clarifying the subtext of the preceding statements, with no harm done by their putting a fine point on matters.[255]

Wildavsky, *Assimilation versus Separation: Joseph the Administrator and the Politics of Religion in Biblical Israel.* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1993), 124; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 429.

[251] Calvin, Hamilton, von Rad, and Wenham; Westermann disagrees. Calvin, 347; Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 606; von Rad, *Genesis*, 353-54 (ET, 399); Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 446; Westermann, *Genesis: 3*, 188 (ET, 169).

[252] See Green, 181; Coats, *Canaan*, 51; Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 356-57; Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 607.

[253] Amos, *Genesis*, 262; Calvin, 347; Delitzsch, *Neuer*, 497-98 (ET, 344-45); Dillmann, *Die Genesis*, 417-19 (ET, 418-22); Fretheim, "Genesis," 653; Gunkel, *Genesis*, 463-64 (ET, 440-41); von Rad, *Genesis*, 353-55 (ET, 399, 401); Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 445.

[254] Amos, *Genesis*, 262; Green, 181-82.

[255] Wenham and Westermann argue that the brothers are only further emphasizing what Joseph had planned for them to say. The mention of their occupation and the emphasis on the temporariness of

D′: The outcome is as desired in *D*, but Pharaoh adds an opportunity for the brothers to oversee the royal livestock. Perhaps the results of the audience are thus better than Joseph expected in *D*, or perhaps Joseph planned this royal appointment all along but omitted to tell his brothers in *D* as a part of his strategy of achieving his goals, just as he chose not to tell Pharaoh certain things in *A′*.[256]

E′: Pharaoh's stated rationale is entirely different from Joseph's. Is he simply very good natured, generously offering the best of Egypt to his guests,[257] or is this just the appearance of largesse, hiding the darker attitude of *E* under the offer of Goshen, a location which keeps the foreign shepherds at a distance?[258] The text offers no obvious answer.[259]

With several options for interpreting each of the points where ch. 47 departs from the script given in ch. 46, the overall dynamic of the scene as a whole can shift considerably. Joseph may or may not be angling for royal appointments for his brothers.[260] Pharaoh may or may not be as welcoming as he seems. The brothers may be hopelessly inept bunglers, or simply a tad verbose. With so much ambiguity, much is left to the interpreter, who can reach a legitimate range of conclusions about the dynamic portrayed here, from a genial acceptance of welcome guests to a calculating jockeying for strategic placement amongst a number of self-interested power players. A few observations can be made, however, that assist in reading the significance of sojourn in this text.

First, a certain level of ambiguity seems to be built into the text. Casting a glance backwards, we recall the plays on the dual meaning of √נתן in ch. 23, the deceptions of the wife-sister tales (chs. 12, 20, 26) that were also defended as truth

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their stay are meant to work in tandem, reassuring Pharaoh that they do not seek positions in the civil service. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 445; Westermann, *Genesis: 3*, 186-88 (ET, 168-69).

[256] J. Berman believes that Joseph's departure from the script he conveyed to his brothers reveals him to be duplicitous both to his brothers and to Pharaoh; Joseph shrewdly tells each of the two sides what they want to hear, and is fully open with neither party. Joshua Berman, "Identity Politics and the Burial of Jacob (Genesis 50:1-14)," *CBQ* 68, no. 1 (2006): 16.

[257] Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 6-8; Humphreys, 129-30; von Rad, *Genesis*, 355 (ET, 401). Berman offers an insightful analysis of Pharaoh's sunny reception as the easy welcome of a dominant culture with none of the identity angst (and resulting machinations) displayed by the immigrants it is absorbing. Berman: 18-19.

[258] Turner writes, "...true attitudes are concealed beneath the diplomatic niceties. What appears to be royal generosity, is actually a manifestation of Egyptian social prejudice." Turner, *Genesis*, 195.

[259] Green touches on both possible interpretations, then stresses the difficulty of mining Pharaoh's response for further clarity. She notes, however, that it seems suspicious for the Pharaoh to be so pliant as to reward refuges with an unsullied gift of the best of the land. Green, 182, 214-15.

[260] For the former opinion, see Donald B. Redford, *A Study of the Biblical Story of Joseph (Genesis 37-50)*, VTSup (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1970), 160-61.

(20:12), and the various machinations and self-defenses of Jacob and Laban's interactions (chs. 29-31). These scenes share with ch. 47 a degree of opacity in communication, where multiple meanings can be indicated in the speeches of the characters, and the speakers play upon the various possibilities to their advantage. Or, perhaps, the reader can set aside suspicions of a lurking subtext—but we are never quite sure.[261] These scenes also share with ch. 47 the explicit setting of sojourn. The marginality of the sojourner's position, and its inherent ambiguity of loyalties and commitments, are logically connected with the duality of meaning in the conversations that are held with the power holders in the land. Ch. 47, without adhering strictly to the pattern of the "first sojourn scenario" explored previously, echoes a theme that resonates through that group of texts: slippery speech, shifting in it significations, playing a field of options between the figures of the sojourner and the native power.[262]

Second, the text spotlights sojourn. Regardless of the possible motivations for the brothers' additional speech in 47:4, regardless of whether it serves the aims of the original script in ch. 46 or works against it, and regardless of whether its effect on Pharaoh was positive or whether his ultimate decision was given despite the speech, the mention of sojourn is a substantial departure from script and as such commands attention. The syntax of the statement reinforces an emphasis on sojourn in the brothers' speech: the phrase "to sojourn in the land," לָגוּר בָּאָרֶץ, comes at the beginning of the sentence, with the main verb "we have come," בָּאנוּ, following.[263]

What is the significance of this sojourn element that is thus emphasized? On the microeconomic level of the brothers' situation, sojourn functions here to clarify the status they desire in Egypt. The brothers' statement in 47:4 spells out that Canaan is their home, that only the exceptional circumstances of the famine have caused them to leave it, and that their stay in Egypt is meant to be temporary. Perhaps their

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[261] The suggestion of manipulation in this scene is lightly painted; heavier brush strokes, however, depict the theme of deceit interweaving throughout the larger Joseph narrative, from the brothers to Potiphar's wife to Joseph himself.

[262] Niditch explores an extended comparison between Jacob and Joseph. She finds that both narratives depicts the rise of the marginalized underdog, but argues that the Joseph narrative advocates honesty over subterfuge. She then parallels Jacob's trickery with Abraham's in 12:10-20, while Joseph's success is compared to Abraham's in 20:1-18. While her overall case is persuasive, ch. 47 seems to depict success attained by some measure of craftiness, supporting a broad parallel between all the stories mentioned. Niditch, *Prelude*, 70-78, 102-25.

[263] P. Joüon explains that the infinitive with ל is placed at the beginning in this verse, contrary to the statistically dominant pattern Verb-Subject, to emphasize the intended aim of the action (here, sojourn). Joüon, § 155r.

reference to sojourn also emphasizes that they are not asking for legal land holdings but only the permission to "settle," √ישׁב.[264] These clarifications play a role in the dialogue with the Pharaoh, which is concerned with the locale of the brothers' residence in Egypt and the occupational role they will play there. Sojourn in v. 4 thus functions in a pragmatic, concrete sense.

Given the wider narrative context of Genesis as a whole, however, the sojourn reference here also strikes a deeper chord, resonating with its occurrences in other texts where its significance points beyond immediate socioeconomic status. Together with the itinerary references discussed in the previous chapter, this text contributes to a placement of Egypt as not-home on the ideological map drawn by the text, connecting Israelite identity with the land of Canaan as the arena of its ethnic realization. Together with the dialogue texts discussed in this chapter, this text portrays complex dynamics of interaction between the sojourner and the native Other. And together with the promise texts discussed first in this study, this text portrays the Israelites' sojourn in Egypt as divinely appointed, a prearranged stage on the journey toward the fulfillment of the promises to the patriarchs (this point will be further discussed below). The prominence of sojourn in the dialogue of ch. 47 allows the arrival of Jacob's household in Egypt to be added to the growing corpus of sojourn encounters in Genesis, confirming themes played upon by prior references, and also adding its own unique contribution.

Last, the sojourn text in ch. 47 depicts an interaction between sojourning Israelites and a foreign potentate that ends in success for the Israelite side. Despite (or because of) the tricky dynamics of the dialogue, the final outcome seems to be a clear gain for Jacob's family. Settling in Goshen was Joseph's hope for them since his initial sketch of their future in 45:10, re-emphasized by his stated aim for the audience with Pharaoh in 46:34, hinted at in his oblique reference of 47:1, frankly requested by the brothers in 47:4, then magnanimously granted by Pharaoh in 47:6. The success echoes the past successes of the sojourning patriarchs in Genesis, when through or in spite of their deceiving of the native authorities, they gain material prosperity. Here again, the underdog sojourner wins the day in the face of the home

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[264] Daube sees "sojourn" and "settling" as synonymous in this reference, but Alter sees "settling" as connoting fixed abode and in contradiction with the request to sojourn. Daube, *Exodus*, 26; Alter, *Genesis*, 280.

team's advantage. [265] As discussed previously, the sojourner's success confirms Israel's ethnic identity in two ways. Directly, the success confirms divine election for Israel, who despite its disadvantages as a sojourner has divine power on its side, and accordingly prospers (quite literally) at the expense of the non-elect Other. [266] Indirectly, also, the success of the sojourner is depicted as a fulfillment of divine promises, and thus the sojourn period, while itself a delay in fulfillment of the land promise, becomes a surprising arena for the confirmation of the promises and therefore of the election of Israel.

Both the preceding paragraphs have touched upon the connection between sojourn in ch. 47 and the promises to the patriarchs. This point requires support by analysis of the larger episode encompassing 46:1-47:31. [267] This wider text serves to connect the sojourn references of ch. 47 with two aspects of the promises: first, the premeditated delay in fulfillment which the sojourn in Egypt represents, and second, the initiation of fulfillment in some aspects of the promise that occurs during the period of sojourn itself.

The sojourn reference in 47:4 signposts the move of Jacob's household to Egypt as sojourn, conjuring up the reference to sojourn in Egypt in the promise text of 15:13. The Egyptian sojourn in 15:13 is foretold by God as part of a scheme that confirms Israel's election over and against Egypt, the nation which hosts Israel as sojourners but also oppresses and enslaves them. When the ancestors of Israel come to Egypt as sojourners, then, as highlighted by 47:4, the text has already set up the question as to whether this is the divinely-appointed sojourn foretold in 15:13. This question is clearly answered by the lead-up to the episode in 46:1-4. There, as Jacob pauses before entering Egypt, God appears to him and confirms that Jacob should go down to Egypt, and that God will bring him up again from there. Both the sojourn and its eventual, divinely orchestrated termination are ordered and appointed by God

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[265] W.L. Humphreys, in contrast, argues that this story has no villains and heroes, but that the interests of Israel and Egypt are in harmony with mutual benefit throughout, showing a marked contrast with the role of Egypt in the rest of Israel's narrative tradition. Niditch also maintains there is no us-them quality to this story. Humphreys, 75, 129-30, 190-91; Niditch, *Prelude*, 122.

[266] The power reversal is furthered in the remainder of the chapter, which depicts the hunger and enslavement of the Egyptians, bracketed by references to the expansion and abundant provision experienced by Joseph's family. The situation will be reversed at the beginning of Exodus, then reversed again as Israel is liberated from enslavement and comes out of Egypt with great possessions. Green grapples with the difficulties for the modern reader in what she terms the "triumphalistic" depiction of Joseph's land management. Green, 184, 215.

[267] For analyses supporting the literary unity of 46:1-47:31, see Coats, *Genesis*, 294-95; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 439.

in this promise speech. This sojourn in Egypt, then, flagged as such by 47:4, is the particular sojourn awaited since 15:13: the sojourn that will define Israel's identity over against its oppressor Egypt, and that will ultimately resolve into the long-awaited fulfillment of the promise of the land.[268]

Sojourn in past texts has come to be associated with promise fulfillment as well as with promise delay, and 47:4 within the context of chs. 46-47 further contributes to this motif.[269] Jacob's obedience to God's locative command in 46:3, like that of Abraham and Isaac before him, initiates a sequence of events depicting God's fulfillment of the promises. The audience with Pharaoh itself is successful, indirectly confirming the promise of divine accompaniment in Egypt given to Jacob in 46:4. The movement of Jacob's household from famine (47:4) to food (47:12) also exemplifies God's aid in material provision for the family. Another gain won during the audience is a land allotment. V. 11 refers to the land as a "holding," אֲחֻזָּה,[270] a word characteristic of P,[271] often descriptive of the ancestral burial plot in Canaan (23:4, 9, 20; 49:30; 50:13), and used in 17:8 and 48:4 to refer to the divinely promised inheritance of the land of Canaan. Its use here (and again in verbal form, √אחז, in 47:27) is perhaps a hint that the divine promises are bearing fruit in Egypt, even if it is not the final fulfillment awaited in Canaan.[272] The list of Jacob's offspring, appended to the account of their move in 46:8-27, illustrate by enumeration the expansion of the family, another realization of divine promises. The emphasis in the genealogy on children born outside of Canaan (both Jacob's and Joseph's, 46:15, 20) reiterates the theme of promise fulfillment in the midst of

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[268] Wenham states that the sojourn reference in 47:4 "fulfils the prophecy in 15:13." Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 446.

[269] Hints of promise fulfillment can be traced in the larger Joseph narrative as well (e.g., the repeated themes of divine accompaniment and the spread of blessing to others in ch. 39). The indicators of fulfillment in chs. 46-47 are particularly concentrated, however, and more closely connected to sojourn.

[270] The word is further highlighted by a structure of repetition between Pharaoh's command in 47:6 and Joseph's execution in 47:11. In both verses, Pharaoh's instruction is for the father and brothers are to settle in the best part of the land, but in the latter verse, an additional phrase states that Joseph grants them a holding.

[271] Westermann lists P usage of the word in 17:8; 23:4, 9, 20; 36:43; 47:11; 48:4; 49:30; 50:13. Westermann, *Genesis: 3*, 191 (ET, 171).

[272] Coote and Ord state that the land grant in Egypt presents a disjunction with the pending land grant in Canaan, raising the question again of when the possession of Canaan would take place. Such a reminder of an unfulfilled promise, lurking in the very word that hints at its fulfillment, is consonant with sojourn as it is depicted here. See Coote and Ord, 197.

sojourn.[273] 47:27 describes the growth of the family in vivid terms that directly quote the promises, both those of fruitfulness, פרה√ (17:6; 28:3; 35:11; 48:4) and increase, רבה√ (17:2; 22:17; 26:4, 24; 28:3; 35:11; 48:4. 46:3), and the promise of transformation into a nation *during their stay in Egypt* (46:3).[274] During Jacob's audience with Pharaoh, directly following that of his sons, he becomes the first of the ancestors to utter a blessing on anyone outside the family; the gesture hints that the promise of being a means of blessing for others is now being fulfilled.[275] Finally, the ultimate promise fulfillment awaited throughout Genesis, and explicitly foretold as a return from Egypt in 46:4 and 15:14, is foreshadowed by Joseph's oath to Jacob in 47:29-31. This sojourn, perhaps more than any other in Genesis, confirms that the promises are being and will continue to be fulfilled. Green's vivid words about the Joseph narrative are also an apt description of sojourn, the herald of both fulfillment and delay:

> There is a consistent temporal-spatial narrative technique of apparent delay, with the needed vector already in motion. Joseph feels stuck in the pit and in prison, but his brother Judah had already articulated the profit, the butler emerges already programmed to speak the words for release. The children of Israel seem to languish forgetfully in Egypt, but the bones of Joseph are packed for the journey out. What seems a pit of death or danger is already a place of safety and survival; time seems wasted but works silently to deliver.[276]

B. Jacob Describes His Life as Sojourn

After the audience of the brothers with Pharaoh in 47:3-6, Joseph presents his father Jacob before Pharaoh in 47:7-10. The reference stands at the center of a chiastic structure that emphasizes Jacob's statement about sojourn. The text may be plotted thus:[277]

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[273] Greifenhagen notes that the naming of Joseph's son Ephraim in 41:52 represents the fulfillment of promises of fruitfulness made to the patriarchs. Greifenhagen, *Egypt*, 36.

[274] 46:3 echoes the promises of 12:2; 17:6; 35:11, but adds the unique element of Egypt as the setting for its fulfillment.

[275] Amos, *Genesis*, 263. Further, Fretheim and Wenham argue that Joseph's agrarian policies in ch. 47 are depicted as saving the lives of Egyptians and engendering their gratitude, and thus are also a fulfillment of the promise for blessing to the nations; Turner mounts a counter-argument. See Fretheim, "Genesis," 654-55; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 447, 452; Turner, *Genesis*, 197. For a thoroughly negative evaluation of Joseph's policies, see Berel Dov Lerner, "Joseph the Unrighteous," *Judaism* 38, no. 3 (1989): 279-81.

[276] Green, 200.

[277] B.A. McKenzie also finds evidence of chiasmus in this text, but does not chart it in detail. Brian Alexander McKenzie, "Jacob's Blessing on Pharaoh: An Interpretation of Gen 46:31-47:26," *WTJ* 45 (1983): 391.

A Joseph brought Jacob his father and stood him before Pharaoh.   v. 7

B   Jacob blessed Pharaoh.   v. 7

C   Pharaoh said to Jacob, "How many are the days of the years of your life?"   v. 8

D   Jacob said to Pharaoh, "The days of the years of my sojourn are 130.   v. 9

E   Few and hard have been the days of the years of my life.   v. 9

C′   They do not reach the days of the years of the lives of my fathers   v. 9

D′   during the days of their sojourn."   v. 9

B′   Jacob blessed Pharaoh,   v. 10

A′ and went out from before Pharaoh.   v. 10

The particular words that structure the text by their repetition are:

A לִפְנֵי פַרְעֹה before Pharaoh.   v. 7

B   וַיְבָרֶךְ יַעֲקֹב אֶת־פַּרְעֹה Jacob blessed Pharaoh   v. 7

C   יְמֵי שְׁנֵי חַיֶּיךָ the days of the years of your life   v. 8

D   יְמֵי שְׁנֵי מְגוּרַי the days of the years of my sojourn   v. 9

E   יְמֵי שְׁנֵי חַיַּי the days of the years of my life   v. 9

C′   יְמֵי שְׁנֵי חַיֵּי the days of the years of the lives   v. 9

D′   בִּימֵי מְגוּרֵיהֶם in the days of their sojourn   v. 9

B′   וַיְבָרֶךְ יַעֲקֹב אֶת־פַּרְעֹה Jacob blessed Pharaoh   v. 10

A′ מִלִּפְנֵי פַרְעֹה from before Pharaoh   v. 10

The chiasm is not perfect, as *C′* and *D′* occur in the original order during the second half of the chiasm, rather than the inversion expected. Perhaps C and D can be considered to form one element in the chiasm rather than two. In each coupling, (*C-D*) and (*C′-D′*), Jacob sets up an equation between life and sojourn. In the first coupling, (*C-D*), Pharaoh asks Jacob "How many are the days of the years of your life?" Jacob answers, "The days of the years of my sojourn are one hundred and thirty." "Sojourn" takes the place of "life" in an exact substitution.[278] In the second coupling, (*C-D*), Jacob speaks of "the days of the years of the lives of my fathers in the days of their sojourn." Here "life" is equated with "sojourn" in that Jacob's fathers spent their lives "in" sojourn; that is, sojourn is the descriptor that encompassed their lives. The two statements speak of life as sojourn, and lives spent in sojourn. The two couplings, (*C-D*) and (*C′-D′*), bracket the middle statement, *E*,

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[278] E. Lowenthal writes that Jacob's paraphrasing "life" as "sojourn" suggests that life for him *is* sojourn. Eric I. Lowenthal, *The Joseph Narrative in Genesis* (New York: Ktav, 1973), 124.

that the days of the years of Jacob's life have been few and hard. Three observations below will move from the center of the chiasm to its outer elements.

1) The central thrust of Jacob's speech is that his life has been short and difficult (מְעַט וְרָעִים). The characteristics of this life, bracketed by his description of life as sojourn, focus on the hardship he has experienced. Following upon his son's statement in v. 4 describing their current visit to Egypt as sojourn, the implication is that the present sojourn Jacob is experiencing also falls under the hardship of sojourn he describes. Sojourn is difficult; Jacob's past has revealed this, and now his present and future will do so as well. This emphasis of Jacob's underscores the negative dimension of sojourn. Structurally, however, his statement is enveloped by a textual bracket that points in another direction. Just before his audience with Pharoah, Pharaoh issues the command that the family is to settle in the best of the land of Egypt (v. 6); immediately after his audience, the text reports the execution of Pharaoh's command with a close verbal parallel (v. 11). The brothers' audience with Pharaoh had described the *famine* in Canaan which drove them to sojourn (v. 4); the conclusion to the episode after both audiences are over is the *food* the household now receives in Egypt (v. 12).[279] The larger movement of the episode is from famine to food, from scarcity to plenty, and in the larger arc of the narrative, from death to life. This change for the better follows from the sojourn of the family and is inextricably bound up with it. Sojourn is negative but it is also positive; ultimately, as this text shows, the positive dimension of sojourn frames and redefines the negative.

2) The two couplings on either side of the central statement equate sojourn with life. The statement is not a metaphor, although it may pave the way for the metaphorical usage that develops in Psalms and prayers elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. Sojourn, rather, has been an actuality so prevalent in Jacob's life that it is appropriate to generalize it as a descriptor for the whole of his life. The characteristic phrase of P, "land of sojourn" (אֶרֶץ מְגוּרֵיהֶם), is transformed here from a spatial to a temporal statement, "years of sojourn" (בִּימֵי מְגוּרֵיהֶם).[280] This time Jacob has spent in sojourn now broadens, in retrospect, to encompass all the years of his existence. Sojourn in Paddan-aram (32:4) and in Egypt (47:4, 9) has added up to a life spent predominantly in sojourn. His fathers too lived lives of sojourn. Jacob here describes

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[279] Compare the similar trajectory in ch. 26, previously discussed.

[280] Westermann suggests that the phrase "years of sojourn" here suggests a later layer within the P source. Westermann, *Genesis: 3*, 190 (ET, 171).

an existence that has renounced settling and possession, in favor of an orientation toward future fulfillment, a dependence on the promises.[281] At the end of Isaac's life, a statement from P about the sojourn of both Abraham and Isaac gave a similar overarching précis to both the patriarch's lives (37:27). Now, as Jacob's life draws to a close, P gives to his life also this broad summation of sojourn. Genesis itself is coming to its conclusion, and this is the last reference to sojourn in the book. It is fitting that this final sojourn reference suggests the broadest scope to the term. Sojourn is the "curiously ambiguous relationship to promise and fulfillment"[282] experienced by Jacob for all of his life; here he almost says that sojourn *is* his life. The future orientation of sojourn is a way of life for Jacob, as it was for his fathers: "…characteristic of each patriarch has been the sojourning shape of life, its unsettled character, moving toward a goal set by the promises of God."[283] The text suggests an understanding of sojourn which transcends actualities of location and begins to shade toward an attitude or an orientation. The concept is not yet a metaphor, but the suggestion is there for texts beyond Genesis to explore and develop.[284]

3) Jacob's speech about sojourn is bracketed by a double blessing (ברך√) he bestows on Pharaoh, striking both in its repetition and in its inversion of the expected power relationship. The encounter between potentate and patriarch, like the audience of the brothers, sounds a soft echo of prior sojourn interactions, this time in the "second scenario." An initial asymmetrical encounter, ending with a decision about land allotment, is followed by an encounter exhibiting parity and reciprocity, after which the patriarch makes a concrete land claim. The dignity allotted Jacob before Pharaoh in this encounter is as unexpected as the honor accorded Abraham and Isaac in their roles as the negotiating partner of kings (chs. 21 and 26). Pharaoh's respect for Jacob's age resembles the statements recognizing the success and divine favor enjoyed by the patriarchs (21:22; 26:28). Most importantly, an amicable exchange is clinched by the proffering of a positive gesture that crosses the boundaries between sojourner and native. Gift-giving and virtues of kindness were the focus in past episodes; here Jacob gives Pharaoh a blessing. The blessing, an expression of desire

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[281] See von Rad, *Genesis*, 356 (ET, 402-03).
[282] Ibid., 356 (ET, 403).
[283] Fretheim, "Genesis," 653.
[284] Delitzsch suggests that Jacob's use of sojourn shows that he considers his life a wandering pilgrimage on earth, compared with true rest at home in the afterlife. The text here, however, does not support a full-blown metaphorical usage for sojourn. See Delitzsch, *Neuer*, 499 (ET, 347).

for God's favor toward the other,[285] places Jacob in the position of a giver and thus accords him a dignity that transforms his lowly status as a supplicant sojourner before Pharaoh.[286] It also crosses the boundary between the two figures, creating a bond based upon ethical virtue. The text portrays another "sojourn virtue," the ability of the sojourner to establish a bond with the more powerful Other by extending a hand of blessing across the boundary separating them. Like the prior virtues Genesis has connected with sojourn, this ethical perspective brings flexibility and strength to a category of identity that could otherwise suffer rigidity and weakness.

The sojourn references in 47:4, 9 follow close upon each other in succeeding scenes. Both times, the speakers (Joseph's brothers and then Jacob) refer to sojourn in answers that go beyond what Pharaoh has asked; they add unsolicited, "extra" material that the narrative structure highlights as significant. Both statements are self-identifications of sojourn, the brothers stating sojourn as their intent and Jacob using sojourn to describe his life. Other than Abraham's statement in 23:4 and Jacob's in 32:4, only here is sojourn volunteered as a self-designation; everywhere else it is the narrator, God, or another character who attributes sojourn to the patriarchs. Both references in ch. 47 point to a sojourn that is expansive; the brothers desire a sojourn in Egypt that will end up stretching extensively, and Jacob perceives a sojourn that expands to encompass all his life as well as those of his fathers. These final references to sojourn in Genesis thus stand at a turning point. On the one hand, looking back to the references preceding, they echo and confirm many of the themes developed in connection with sojourn up until this point: sojourn bolstering the myth of ethnic election by heralding promise fulfillment; sojourn maintaining a productive tension between distance and exchange with the Other; and sojourn expanding beyond temporary estrangement to suggest a long-term way of living in the world. On the other hand, these sojourn references hold the seeds of reflection in two new directions, that of sojourn as self-identification, perhaps even self-confession, and

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[285] Mitchell contends that the blessing here is a mere greeting; Alter, Hamilton, McKenzie, and Westermann counter that it includes a greeting but carries the force of blessing as well, and Wenham describes it as a prayer for Pharaoh's welfare. Mitchell, 107; Alter, *Genesis*, 280; Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 610-11; McKenzie: 393-94; Westermann, *Genesis: 3*, 189-90 (ET, 170); Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 446.

[286] The unusual social inversion is noted by several interpreters. See Amos, *Genesis*, 263; Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 354; Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 611; Humphreys, 80; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 446; Westermann, *Genesis: 3*, 189-90 (ET, 170).

that of sojourn as a broad category, expansive enough to eventually transcend concrete reality and enter the realm of religious metaphor.

Conclusion

Sojourn references in the dialogues of Genesis focus attention in a new direction, that of interaction with the Other. The ancestors of Israel are depicted in dynamic interrelationship with settled power-holders in a variety of sojourn settings—Sodom, Gerar, Hebron, Paddan-aram, and Egypt. Some broad patterns repeat in the shape of these interactions across generations, although exact replication is clearly not the intent of the narrative. Several but not all of the references play a part in a pattern that recurs in each generation, for Abraham in 21:23; for Jacob in 32:5; and for Joseph and his brothers (although only faintly echoing the pattern) in 47:4, 9.[287] In the first scenario of the pattern, the patriarch interacts closely with a native power figure, and the relationship is characterized by an asymmetry of power and by deception on the part of the patriarch. The model is portrayed as a failure through narrative emphasis on ethical reproach from the native figure and through a physical distancing of the patriarch. God champions the sojourning patriarch, however, who emerges with material gain and experiences the partial fulfillment of the divine promises during his period of sojourn. In the second scenario of the pattern, territorial distance is maintained between the patriarch and the local powers, parity and symmetry is emphasized between the two sides, and the virtue of the ancestor is highlighted in a boundary-crossing exchange. The model is portrayed as successful through the achievement of peaceful balance in the relationship and through an indicator of territorial establishment (and thus promise fulfillment) for the patriarch.

The focus of the analysis in this chapter has not been primarily upon a detailed argument for the "pattern" outlined above, nor upon a full exploration of the ethical thrust of the first scenario in the pattern. An overall sketch of the pattern, however, and a clarification of the preparatory role of the first scenario, together serve to set the stage for a focus on the second scenario in the pattern, in which we

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[287] The appearance of the pattern in chs. 12 and 26 is included in the analysis arguing for this schema, but since the sojourn references are not in the form of a dialogue, they are not analyzed at length in this chapter.

find sojourn references in dialogue form. Here we find in each instance a delicate balance of power, a careful delineation of territorial integrity, and a positive focus on the ability of the patriarch to (inter)act virtuously, in a way that both preserves boundaries with the Other and yet also sustains a relationship across these borders. The story of Abraham's negotiation with the Hittites in ch. 23, although it does not follow a story exemplifying the "first scenario," shares with the "second scenario" stories the emphases listed above.

The analysis in this chapter has focused on the ways in which the interactions of the ancestors strengthen Israel's ethnic myth. The "sojourn virtues" enacted by the patriarchs serve to establish them in the ethnoscape, thus intensifying the territorial element of Israel's identity. This narrative device serves to tie territorial establishment to the continued practice of these virtues, thus pointing the way to continued achievement of ethnic values. The stories also highlight ethnic election, underscoring material gain and promise fulfillment in the context of an antagonistic relationship with the non-elect in the "first scenario," and upholding the virtue of the ancestor as a model for peaceful interaction with the non-elect in the "second scenario." Ch. 19 joins the other five stories in presenting a powerful case for openness to the Other as the avenue to ethnic establishment. While all the texts portray boundary-crossing virtues as direct contributions to the strength of the ethnic myth, it is also clear that these ancestral virtues buttress the ethnic myth indirectly, by endowing it with flexibility. The careful balance of separation with coexistence, and of detachment with congeniality, maintains a fruitful tension that sidesteps the dangers inherent in either extreme.[288] For an *ethnie* as politically and territorially

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[288] Two scholars analyzing the relationships of the patriarchs with the natives illustrate the hypothetical "extremes" which the text actually avoids. On the one side, Cohn argues that Genesis rejects economic and marital/sexual ties with the native population, upholding a model of ethnic separateness. His analysis is strained, however, when he comes up against narrative ambiguity in the wife-sister tales and the Dinah story; he is forced to read an unequivocal narrative judgment against intermingling, and thus sacrifices a tension which I believe the text purposefully maintains. His analysis of ch. 23 is likewise insufficiently nuanced in its single emphasis on the "separateness" of the burial location. On the other side, Habel argues that the Abraham narrative depicts entirely peaceful relations of the patriarch with the natives, and proposes a non-invasive "immigrant ideology" of friendly interaction. He too must sidestep some textual complexity, however, such as the antagonistic undercurrent in some scenes of the Abraham narrative, and the predicted dispossession of the natives in ch. 15. In addition, Habel's interpretation ultimately places the model of Abraham alongside other models of interaction in the rest of the Hebrew bible with no resolution for the contradiction he sees between them. My reading allows a more complex tension to stand within the patriarchal narratives themselves. See Cohn, "Before," 74-90; Cohn, "Negotiating," 147-66; Habel, 115-48.

unstable as Israel, the stories of sojourning ancestors uphold a model that grounds a truly sustainable ethnic identity.

The usefulness of sojourn in service to ethnic identity is indicated by its gradual expansion over the course of the Genesis narrative from a temporary concrete status into a comprehensive category which can span all of a person's life, and even point to an entire way of being. The virtues here associated with sojourn lay the groundwork for reflections elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible on sojourn as a way of life. Here in Genesis, however, sojourn is clearly established as a significant part of the ethnic myth with directive capacity to guide the future of the *ethnie*.

CONCLUSION

At the conclusion of this textual survey of sojourn references in Genesis, it is now possible to discern a diversity that serves a unity. Sojourn's many appearances as a *Leitwort* in the narrative vary across a spectrum of values and usage, yet each occurrence contributes an element of strength to the ethnic myth. The people of Israel, those looking to the patriarchs as their ancestors, can find in sojourn a valuable resource supporting collective identity.

Anthony D. Smith's work has helped to illuminate the role of sojourn and resolve its apparent incongruities. A final summation here will follow the three main categories borrowed from Smith for use as heuristic tools in the analysis of sojourn: ethnoscape, election, and ethics.

Ethnoscape

As the Genesis narrative sketches the shape of Israel's ideological map, Canaan emerges as an ethnic homeland, or ethnoscape. One way in which sojourn throws light on the ethnoscape is by darkening the contrast with locations of estrangement outside and around it. Egypt is the first location of sojourn in Genesis (12:10); cyclical patterns of sojourn there repeat throughout the narrative and lay the groundwork for the ultimate journey of departure from Egypt and return to Canaan in the Exodus, foretold in 15:13. The last sojourn scene in Genesis also accents estrangement in Egypt, as Jacob's sons sojourn there (47:4). The book closes with the children of Israel dwelling in this strange land, awaiting a return "home."

Paddan-aram is also a land of sojourn. Jacob sojourns there with Laban (32:5), experiencing during his stay the material gain and birth of progeny that come to be a feature of patriarchal life in sojourn. Jacob's long, carefully structured circuit from Canaan to Paddan-aram and back illustrates the shape of sojourn outside Canaan: prolonged, perhaps; difficult, occasionally; divinely blessed, emphatically; but most of all, *temporary.* Estrangement outside Canaan resolves in belonging within it; sojourn is a vector that points from various directions of the ideological map toward the center, Israel's ethnoscape. That the returns of the patriarchs to Canaan are divinely mandated and divinely enabled underlines the sacred nature of this

ethnoscape, which is established from the start by divine charter appointing this land for this *ethnie.*

Yet the Genesis narrative, and the patriarchs who are its heroes, do not begin in Canaan. Preceding all the structured out-and-back circuits with Canaan at their center is the initial movement of Abraham from Mesopotamia to Canaan, a single linear journey with Canaan at its end point. This original journey lies in the background of every reference to *Canaan* as a location of sojourn, for Canaan is not the birthplace of Israel. The reiteration of patriarchal sojourn in Canaan in 17:8; 23:4; 28:4; 35:27; and 37:1 is an emphatic affirmation that Israel is not autochthonous in Canaan. Its strangerhood there signals, paradoxically, a claim that is higher than native origin: the divine mandate prompting Abraham's first journey, and binding Israel to Canaan with a sacred bond. Canaan is a *sacred* ethnoscape, and the shorthand designating this element of the ethnic myth is patriarchal sojourn there. In their momentous decision to respond to the divine call and journey from Paddan-aram to Canaan, Jacob's wives mirror Abraham's journey and make a commitment of their own to life in a land of sojourn (28:4), showing that for all Israel's ancestors, sojourn in Canaan is a central element of identity.

Sojourn in Canaan also points forward, contrasting present alienation with the future possession promised by the deity. The divine command to Isaac in 26:3 to sojourn in a land promised as a future possession accents a flexible relation to the ethnoscape, one that serves ethnic identity. In sojourn Isaac experiences divine blessing, a sign that points to the eventual (but not yet realized) actualization of future possession of the land. In the meantime, however, he lives in an ethnoscape he does not concretely possess. The positive portrait of Isaac's life in sojourn provides a resource for the *ethnie* should it once again lack sovereignty over its territory. The bonds of divine promise and future expectation connect a sojourning people to its homeland, forging an ethnoscape of memory and destiny—ties that are, ironically, stronger than concrete title.

Sojourn as a state of delayed fulfillment widens, then, to encompass the depictions in any and all locations described by Genesis. Abraham (20:1; 21:34), Jacob (32:5), and Jacob's sons (47:4) all experience blessing as they sojourn. Whether the patriarchs are abroad awaiting return to Canaan, or in Canaan awaiting possession of the land, sojourn is a state of divinely blessed waiting. The patriarchal ties to the ethnoscape are not natural and concrete; they are sacred and paradoxically

strong. Thus even in sojourn, the patriarchs can establish for their descendants the most powerful of claims on the territory of Canaan: that of memory, established by their presence in the land, and maintained by the ethnic myth that crystallizes the stories of their sojourn for their descendants. Sojourn within and without the ethnoscape, we conclude, contributes strength and flexibility to the territorial component of Israel's ethnic myth.

Election

Smith's myth of ethnic election is represented in Genesis by the divine promises to the ancestors. These promises unite the twin elements of ethnic chosenness and divine land grant in a charter that binds the *ethnie* to its territory by the sacred bond of divine appointment. Sojourn contributes powerfully to both elements, both in the promise speeches themselves as well as in the other forms in which it appears throughout the narrative.

In relation to territory, sojourn functions as a reminder of election on two levels. First, the patriarchs sojourn in Canaan because God took them from their "birthplace" in Mesopotamia, guiding them to a new and strange land appointed as their destiny not by nature, but by divine election. Here sojourn points to outside origins, which in turn point to the promise underlying the initial migration to Canaan (17:8; 28:4). Second, the patriarchs sojourn because God has appointed a time for their possession of the land, but this time has not yet arrived (15:13). In the interim they sojourn in both Egypt and Canaan, but this sojourn has been divinely mandated, and will be divinely resolved (15:13; 17:8; 26:3; 28:4). Sojourn thus confirms the inclusion of a "lowly" status within a divine plan, one which will confirm the people's election with the future reversal of their low status.

Sojourn also functions to confirm ethnic election by highlighting Israel's chosenness over and against other *ethnies*. The resolution of sojourn in Egypt will involve judgment on the people who enslaved Israel (15:13); the termination of sojourn in Canaan will require dispossession of the native peoples (17:8). A number of the "first" type of sojourn scenarios described in this study also illustrate election by divine championing of the patriarchs in their antagonistic interactions with powerful local authorities (the wife-sister stories, Jacob with Laban, and Jacob's sons with Pharaoh).

Thus the patriarchs may experience in sojourn what looks like the opposite of the promises: current non-possession of the land, and present disempowerment with regard to other peoples. Yet this sojourn ironically points to a divine plan for the reversal of dispossession and disempowerment, and thus signals a hidden loftiness concealed in the lowliness of sojourn. That secret high status is divine election, a force ultimately stronger than the local powers in possession of the land. The stories of the patriarchs show hints of this divine power acting on behalf of the elect. As the patriarchs emerge from sojourn experiences in Egypt, Gerar, and Paddan-aram flush with wealth and rich in progeny, the possibility of future termination of their sojourn gains in certainty. The promises are being fulfilled in sojourn; it is only a matter of time before the land promise is fulfilled too. Sojourn, which is the intervening delay, points to its own eradication. In the interim, the *ethnie* has rich resources for identity survival despite lack of hegemony in its land, for not only does dispossession not pose a grave threat to the *ethnie*, but it even signals a positive confirmation of its chosenness. Once again, sojourn functions to bring both strength and flexibility to ethnic identity, here by affirming the divine election of the *ethnie.*

Ethics

Ethnic myths crystallize central values that mobilize communal action. In Genesis, sojourn is associated with the practice of particular virtues that serve as a map for the journey to ethnic realization. Five particular virtues are associated with sojourn stories in Genesis:

1. Hospitality, as an embodiment of righteousness and justice, צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט (19:9)
2. Kindness, חֶסֶד (21:23)
3. Giving, √נתן (23:4)
4. Favor, חֵן (32:5)
5. Blessing, √ברך (47:9)

Each one of the sojourn virtues occurs in the context of interaction between the patriarchs and another character who represents the ethnic Other (either a native power figure or the dis-elect excluded from Israel). In references 2 through 5 a careful balance is preserved between distance and rapprochement. In references 2, 4, and 5 the story follows upon a "first type" of sojourn scenario where inequality of power combined with close proximity to produce an episode of conflict (in reference

3 no actual scenario precedes the story, but the possibility of such an encounter is evoked by the initial innuendos of a gift with strings attached). The "second type" scenarios themselves portray parity of power, mutuality of action, and the conscious preservation of a certain amount of distance between the sojourner and the Other. These factors combine to create a positive atmosphere, in which a particular virtue is emphasized as an act which crosses the boundaries which have just been so carefully drawn. Following the act of virtue, the narrative portrays ethnic establishment for the sojourner. In reference 1, the elements of distance and parity are not emphasized, but a boundary-crossing virtue is practiced by the patriarch, which then correlates with divine establishment of ethnic continuity for his descendants.

The sojourn values portrayed by the narrative are virtues enacted within a sphere of sojourn. They may serve as helpful models for an *ethnie* experiencing disempowerment or marginalization; in such situations these virtues offer paradigms that further flexible and interactional relations with other peoples and powers. The compass these sojourn stories provide points toward serviceable modes of interaction that lead to ethnic establishment and longevity. Once again, sojourn contributes to strong ethnic identity, here by portrayal of a plan for action that leads to ethnic realization.

In 28:4 sojourn was presented as an element of the ethnic myth important enough to demand a personal choice of commitment to it from each one of the ancestral heroes and heroines. In 26:3 sojourn was a divine mandate, demanding obedience and eliciting reward. The broad imperative of sojourn in these references is given detail and texture with the vivid examples of sojourn virtues in the five references above. Sojourn as a period of expectant waiting is not simply characterized as a future-oriented stance, but is also filled out with details of present-focused behavioral ethics. Overall, the Genesis narrative begins to sketch a portrait of sojourn that reaches out from the stories of the ancestral heroes, to elicit action from those who would follow in their footsteps. Sojourn here contributes a final element of strength to the ethnic myth: an ability to direct the future of the *ethnie* with a powerful, compelling blueprint for ethical action serving ethnic survival and longevity.

Sojourn in the ancestral narratives has its rewards: a strong, durable ethnic identity rooted in divine election, connected to a sacred homeland, and capable of directing a sustainable future. As Genesis draws to a close, it portrays sojourn as

increasingly broad, encompassing many locations and stretching to include all of life (47:9). The suggestion that lingers for the reader is that sojourn is a category serviceable not only for the broad identity of biblical Israel, but for any who might claim the metaphor.

Patriarchal sojourn is not merely a springboard into reflection on abstract categories of identity. It is a nuanced, multi-faceted picture of a practical way of being in the world. Its complexity may be the reason for its versatile appeal to so many different writers over the centuries. Its directive capacity for action may explain why it has proved so compelling. The vivid depiction of ancestral sojourn in Genesis provides a model of a strong and flexible identity for biblical Israel, for New Testament Christians, and perhaps for anyone who, like the heroes of Genesis, is seeking a homeland.

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