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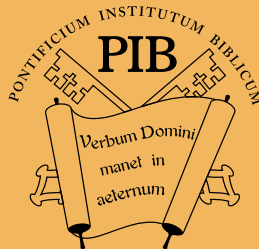
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*The Continuity of the Non-Priestly Narrative  
from Genesis to Exodus*



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## The Continuity of the Non-Priestly Narrative from Genesis to Exodus

The question of whether the non-priestly narrative was continuous from the patriarchs to the exodus is a pressing one in current pentateuchal scholarship. I am very pleased to have been given the opportunity to engage in discussion on this topic with Konrad Schmid, who has published most extensively on this issue. One of the primary aims of this discussion is to illuminate the disparate ways that the text can be read and understood. To that end, Schmid and I have agreed to limit significantly the references to secondary scholarship, and to concentrate on the biblical text and on methodological questions. It is hoped that this procedure will help to reveal more clearly the different methods and assumptions that we each bring to the text. Because Schmid has published at length on this topic<sup>1</sup>, I will write in response to his claims, rather than pretend that the conversation arises in a vacuum. Thus the following will consist of both my views on the continuity between the patriarchs and exodus in the non-priestly text and my reactions to the argument that there is no such continuity.

To quickly sum up the basics of the discussion: Schmid holds that the non-priestly narrative was not always a continuous whole from the patriarchs to the exodus, but rather that it was originally two distinct texts about how Israel came to possess the land of Canaan, one relating the patriarchal story and one relating the exodus story. The first text deliberately to connect the patriarchs and the exodus, according to Schmid, was P — a document, not a redactional layer, that, in its independently composed and self-standing presentation of the early history of Israel, connected the stories of the patriarchs with those of their descendants. Because P was the first to accomplish this connection, according to Schmid, the links we find between the non-priestly patriarchs and exodus accounts are to be ascribed to a

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<sup>1</sup> See K. SCHMID, *Erzväter und Exodus*. Untersuchungen zur doppelten Begründung der Ursprünge Israels innerhalb der Geschichtsbücher des Alten Testaments (WMANT 81; Neukirchen-Vluyn 1999); English Translation: *Genesis and the Moses Story*. Israel's Dual Origins in the Hebrew Bible (Siphrut 3; Winona Lake, IN 2010).

post-priestly redactor. These links were further elaborated in the later redaction history of the Pentateuch. In my essay, I will address this argument from a number of perspectives, and try to show why I think that the textual evidence suggests that the non-priestly narrative was in fact continuous.

### I. Methods in discerning continuity

At the heart of the debate regarding the continuity of the non-priestly<sup>2</sup> patriarch and exodus narratives is a central methodological question: how is literary continuity marked? What indicators do we require in order to conclude that two textual units are in fact one literary whole? We may begin on a note of agreement: the priestly document (Schmid and I agree that P was originally an independent document) demonstrates clear and marked literary continuity between its narratives of the patriarchs and the exodus. This is especially so in the very beginning of the priestly account of the exodus, which by broad scholarly consensus comprises Exod 1,1-5.7.13-14; 2,23aβ-25; 6,2-13. The list of Jacob's sons and the enumeration of Jacob's descendants who went down to Egypt in Exod 1,1-5, which recapitulates the fuller description in Gen 46,8-27; the notice of the increase of the Israelites in Exod 1,7 which in its content, couched in the pluperfect ("the Israelites had been fertile and prolific and had multiplied [...] and the land had been filled with them"), refers back to the first priestly announcement of the increase in Gen 47,27, and in its wording harks back directly to the priestly promises to the patriarchs in Gen 17,6; 28,3; 35,11; 48,4 (and even further to 1,28); God's recollection in Exod 2,24 and 6,4-5.8 of the covenant with the patriarchs in Genesis 17; the divine statement in Exod 6,3 that Yahweh had revealed himself to the patriarchs as El Shaddai, as was indeed the case in Gen 17,1; 28,3; 35,11; 48,3 — all of these are ex-

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<sup>2</sup> I will refer throughout to the non-priestly narrative and text as if it were the work of a single author rather than as the combination of J and E. This is not to imply that the non-priestly narrative is a unity, which neither I nor anyone else (with a few idiosyncratic exceptions such as John Van Seters) hold it to be. It is rather to avoid needlessly complicating the discussion with further divisions of the non-priestly text, and to keep the discourse on a single plane, that is, focused on the question of continuity in P versus non-P.

PLICIT indicators that the narratives of the patriarchs and the exodus are inextricably linked in the P document.

We can further agree that the verbal links between the patriarchs and the exodus in this section of P are considerably denser and more explicit than in the equivalent non-P text. It does not follow, however, that because P's bridge from the patriarchs to the exodus is clearer than in non-P there is no such connection in non-P. Even if the non-priestly text does not contain as explicit a verbal connection at the beginning of the exodus narrative as does P, it has its own set of connections between the two, which will be investigated below — connections that are as distinct from those of P as the non-priestly narrative is distinct from that of P. There is no reason to judge non-P in terms of P (or vice versa). The non-priestly text neither had nor has any obligation to replicate, mimic, or approximate the style (or content) of the priestly text. We must, rather, examine each independently. It is prejudicial to take the priestly text of Exodus 1–6 as the model of literary continuity against which other texts should be judged.

Not only is the priestly style of verbal linking an illegitimate basis against which to compare the non-priestly narrative, but even focusing on the textual pivot between the patriarchs and the exodus at the beginning of the canonical book of Exodus is methodologically problematic. To search in the beginning of Exodus for the bridge between the patriarchs and the exodus is to assume a priori that the texts were separate. This assumption has its basis in Martin Noth's classic argument that the tradition complexes of the patriarchs and the exodus were originally independent. As a tradition-historical argument, this claim may well be valid. But contemporary pentateuchal scholarship has taken the pre-literary tradition units of Noth and turned them into textual units: the independent traditions of Noth are now the independent texts of current scholarship — and the idea of the oral tradition underlying the biblical text has essentially been discarded.

This means that the division that is either sought or assumed between the patriarchs and the exodus is a scholarly imposition on the text: it emerges from the development of tradition criticism from Noth to the present. On the textual level, however, in the canonical Pentateuch, there is no such division. We must not be misled by the separation of the Pentateuch into books, either in the case of Genesis and Exodus or elsewhere. Before the compilation of the canonical text, there was no such thing as the book of Genesis or the book of Exo-

dus. The division of the Pentateuch into its five “books” is a function of the material capacity of the ancient scroll: the single literary work of the Pentateuch was too large to fit on a single scroll, and so was broken up into five scrolls, our present pentateuchal books. The book of Genesis was never understood to be a literary work separate from the book of Exodus: there is no inner- or extra-biblical reference to Genesis or Exodus as an independent text — nor is there any inner- or extra-biblical reference to any part of Genesis or Exodus as an independent text<sup>3</sup>. Genesis and Exodus exist only as the first two volumes of a five-volume work, the Pentateuch.

This is all to say that the a priori distinction between the patriarchs and the exodus does not emerge from the canonical Pentateuch itself, which is where the inquiry must begin. In the canonical Pentateuch, the patriarchs and the exodus are part of the same narrative.

To push the issue one step further: it is only if we begin with the assumption that the patriarchs and exodus were originally separate that we can even inquire as to how the non-priestly text marks the continuity between the two. For if we begin instead with the assumption that non-P was in fact a continuous narrative, then we may understand that it need not explicitly signal its own continuity in any particularly demonstrative way at all. A history of Israel’s origins, or any work that is meant to be read continuously from start to finish, is not required to intricately link any of its various episodes or epochs with explicit verbal cross-references. The reader does not require markers linking the middle of the story to the beginning; the reader has, after all, read them in sequence. If non-P were originally continuous, no explicit references back to the patriarchs would be necessary to show that the exodus was part of the same narrative; it would be part of the same narrative because it followed on it in the continuous history.

Of course, explicit verbal links between parts of a continuous history are frequently employed for structural, thematic, or theological reasons. The point is that such links are not necessary; they are, rather, part of the individual author’s stylistic toolkit. Thus even if there were no verbal links at all in the non-priestly patriarch and exodus narratives, it would not mean that they were not part of a

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<sup>3</sup> It is clear that in the early post-biblical period Genesis and Exodus were not considered separate works: we may note the examples of Jubilees, which concludes not at the end of the Joseph story as in Genesis but rather at Sinai, and the Genesis-Exodus scrolls from Qumran.

continuous literary whole. Continuity is indicated not by verbal cross-references, but rather by the establishment of and continuing adherence to historical claims regarding what happened, when, where, why, and how. As long as the historical claims of the text are consistent throughout — and, in the special case of the Pentateuch, are also distinct from those of the other texts with which they have been secondarily combined — there is no need to inquire as to its continuity. This is especially so when the text progresses in chronological order, and when, it should not be forgotten, its only known existence is as a continuous historical work. Such is the case with the non-priestly history of the patriarchs and exodus. When we pick up a novel, we know it to be a literary unity not because the author regularly reminds us of what happened earlier in the book (which would in fact be quite tedious); we know it to be a unity because the plot is continuous, because the historical claims made in one place are assumed elsewhere.

Thus rather than assume that the patriarchs and exodus were originally separate in the non-priestly text and then look for some pristine explicit verbal link to prove it (one similar to those in the priestly narrative), we ought rather to work from the assumption that the non-priestly text is in fact continuous, and then — entirely in isolation from the priestly text — appreciate the historical claims in the non-priestly text that are consistent across its whole.

## II. Continuity in non-P

We may set aside some of the most obvious, but controversial, passages linking the patriarchs and the exodus: Genesis 15<sup>4</sup>, Gen 50,24-25 and Exod 13,19<sup>5</sup>, and Gen 12,10-20. As for the non-priestly promises to the patriarchs, made regularly throughout Gen-

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<sup>4</sup> Although I and some others believe Genesis 15 to be of unified non-priestly origin, much of scholarship seems to have concluded that the chapter is in fact a (unified) post-priestly composition, and the refutation of the prevailing view is simply beyond the scope of this paper.

<sup>5</sup> These passages were classically, and I think correctly, assigned to the same non-priestly hand; a number of recent scholars have assigned these passages and Josh 24,32, in which Joseph's bones are actually buried at Shechem, to a "hexateuchal" redactor. Again, the concepts of the "Hexateuch" and a "hexateuchal redactor", though worthy of serious discussion, are too large to engage here.

esis and referred to regularly throughout Exodus and Numbers, these we will return to below.

Even without these passages, there are ample connections between the patriarchs and the exodus in the non-priestly text. In Genesis, the most obvious is of course the Joseph story in its entirety. The introduction to the non-priestly Joseph story in Genesis 37 is rife with clear links back to the preceding patriarchal narratives. To name but a few: it refers in 37,2 to Bilhah and Zilpah, characters introduced in the non-P narrative of Genesis 30<sup>6</sup>; it refers in 37,3.13 to Jacob as Israel, agreeing with the change of name described in 32,29<sup>7</sup>; its claim for Jacob's excessive love for Joseph is based on Jacob's preference for Rachel, established in Genesis 29<sup>8</sup>; and, not least of all, it climaxes in 37,31–35 with the deception of Jacob by means of Joseph's tunic, which, as has often been noted, harks back with heavy irony to Jacob's own deception of his father, Isaac, in Genesis 27, also by means of a dead animal and the keyword *n-k-r* (hiphil), "recognize" (Gen 27,23)<sup>9</sup>.

The rest of the non-priestly Joseph story follows from Genesis 37 through the end of Genesis 50 (not to mention that any story

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<sup>6</sup> Although P also knows of Bilhah and Zilpah (see Gen 35,25–26; 46,18.25), they are prominent characters in the account of the births of Jacob's sons in Genesis 29–30, which is entirely non-priestly.

<sup>7</sup> P too has Jacob's name changed to Israel, of course, in Gen 35,10; yet, notably, P does not refer to the individual Jacob as Israel anywhere in the remainder of Genesis — Israel is used only as a designation for the entire people in P (Gen 36,31; 46,8; 47,27; 48,20). The non-priestly text, on the other hand, refers to Jacob as Israel frequently (Gen 35,21–22; 42,5; 43,6.8.11, etc.).

<sup>8</sup> In P there is no reference to Jacob's preference for Rachel over Leah, or for any one of his sons over the others. Such references are common in non-P, however: Gen 29,17–18.20.30–34; 33,2.7. Furthermore, in P there are no sibling rivalries at any stage of the patriarchal narratives. Such sibling rivalries are, of course, virtually omnipresent in the non-priestly text.

<sup>9</sup> The explicit literary links between the Jacob story and Joseph story in non-P far exceed anything found in the laconic priestly account of Joseph. If we were judging the relative continuity of P and non-P in this case, non-P is certainly the more continuous of the two; if we were further to use relatively, explicit continuity as a test of literary unity, we would thus conclude that the priestly text from creation through Jacob's settlement in Canaan was originally independent from the priestly text from Jacob's descent into Egypt onward. Such an argument is manifestly ridiculous, of course. But it highlights the methodological problems of judging the priestly and non-priestly texts against each other.

about Jacob, Joseph, and Joseph's brothers requires that the reader know who these characters are and why they are important in Israel's history). The entire narrative is built on the premise that Joseph's descent to Egypt and rise to power there paved the way — through the behind-the-scenes workings of divine providence — for the rest of Jacob's family to migrate to Egypt. This premise is relevant in the history of Israel only as the explanation for how Israel — the entire nation — found themselves in Egypt, which in turn is the prelude only to the exodus tradition.

At the end of the non-priestly Joseph story we find explicit anticipatory references to the exodus. First, there is Jacob's final statement to Joseph, in Gen 48,21: "I am about to die; but God will be with you [pl.] and bring you back to the land of your fathers"<sup>10</sup>. This statement presumes that Jacob's sons will not be able to leave Egypt without God's help. Second, there is the narrator's notice in Gen 50,22 that "Joseph and his father's household remained in Egypt"<sup>11</sup>. Suffice it to say that were this the end of an independent patriarchal narrative, it would leave the reader with the glaring question of how it is that Israel now resides in Canaan rather than

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<sup>10</sup> This passage is identifiably non-priestly because of its dependence on Gen 48,1, in which Joseph is told that Jacob is ill, along with the notice of Jacob's failing eyesight in 48,10. Gen 48,21 is the non-priestly doublet of P's similar statement in 49,29. Furthermore, the notion of God "being with" an individual or Israel as a whole, using the preposition *'im*, is exclusively non-priestly (see Gen 21,22; 26,3.28, etc.). In fact, P uses the preposition *'im* only three times in total: Gen 23,4 [2x] and Lev 15,33.

<sup>11</sup> This verse connects back to 50,14, where Joseph and his brothers return to Egypt after burying Jacob; the two verses form the bookends to the dialogue between Joseph and his brothers in 50,15–21, which contains not only references to the non-priestly stories of the sale of Joseph in Genesis 37 and the interactions between Joseph and his brothers in Egypt, but also the seminal thematic statement of the non-priestly Joseph story: "Although you intended me harm, God intended it for good, so as to bring about the present result — the survival of many people" (50,20). Most important, this dialogue can take place only in Egypt, not in Canaan, for it is only in Egypt that Joseph has the power to say "I will sustain you and your children" (50,21; see 45,11; 47,12); it thus requires the notice in 50,14 that the family has returned to Egypt. In addition, 50,14 mentions "all those who had gone up with him to bury his father", which can refer only to the Egyptians who accompanied Joseph and his family in 50,7.9; according to P, only Joseph and his brothers brought Jacob back to Canaan for burial.



Egypt. Indeed, it is precisely in raising this question that the verse serves as advance notice of the coming exodus story. These are explicit foreshadowings of the exodus, though of course they do not mention oppression or redemption from oppression by name, since neither Jacob nor Joseph nor anyone else in the story knows that such oppression is coming. From the perspective of the larger story, however, these statements make clear that at the end of the Joseph story the family of Jacob is in Egypt for the foreseeable future, but that they will eventually return to Canaan.

It is in the non-priestly passages of Exodus and Numbers that we begin to see not just verbal links to the patriarchal account but, more importantly, narrative dependence on historical claims established in the patriarchal stories. Such dependence is evident from the very first non-priestly words, in Exod 1,6.8: “Joseph died, and all his brothers, and all that generation ... A new king arose over Egypt who did not know Joseph”<sup>12</sup>. These lines demand that the reader know not only who Joseph and his brothers are, but that Joseph had a special role in Egypt’s history; in short, they demand that the reader know the patriarchal stories and the Joseph story in some detail. The continuation of these lines, in 1,9-12, describes Pharaoh’s determination not to let the Israelite people increase in number, and the failure of his scheme<sup>13</sup>. Two elements here are particularly noteworthy. First, Pharaoh refers to the Israelites as a definable independent people within Egypt’s borders (see also 1,15-22). Such an identification presumes that the Israelites are foreigners in Egypt, a presumption based on the account of Jacob’s descent to Egypt with his family at the end of the Joseph story. Without the preceding Joseph story, the sudden introduction of Israel as foreigners in a foreign land would be groundless and confusing. Second, Pharaoh’s intention to keep the Israelites from multiplying presumes that Israel is not yet a particularly large community (which they become only in 1,12); again, this agrees with

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<sup>12</sup> Exod 1,6 cannot be from P, as it interrupts the order of events established by P in Genesis 46–47 that are explicitly resumed in Exod 1,1–5.7. Furthermore, the disjunctively phrased notice in 1,7 that the Israelites had proliferated makes sense only as commentary on the expansion of Israel from seventy people (in 1,5) to an entire nation (in 1,7); as a commentary on the deaths of Joseph and his generation in 1,6 it is quite awkward.

<sup>13</sup> Exod 1,9–12 is inseparable from 1,8, as the subject of the first word of 1,9, *wayyō’mer*, “he said”, has its antecedent only in 1,8, “a new king”.

what has come before it in the narrative, in which the entire Israelite populace comprises no more than Jacob's sons and their families<sup>14</sup>.

The notion that the Israelites constituted a foreign population within Egypt is a recurring one in the non-priestly account. We find mention of it again in Exod 2,22 (repeated in 18,3), when Moses names his son, Gershom, saying, "I have been a stranger in a foreign land". It appears further in the laws of the Covenant Code: "for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Exod 22,20), and "for you know the feelings of the stranger, having been strangers in the land of Egypt" (23,9). Again, these descriptions depend on the reader's knowledge of Israel's origins outside of Egypt; furthermore, the use of the term *gēr* indicates that the Israelites were only temporary sojourners in Egypt and that they went there of their own accord<sup>15</sup>. In other words, the description of the Israelites as strangers in Egypt requires a story very much like that of the patriarchal and Joseph narratives, which establish Israel's homeland and how and why they became a foreign population in Egypt.

The necessity of the patriarchal narratives for understanding the non-priestly exodus account is made even clearer in the call of Moses in Exodus 3. Three times in this chapter God describes himself as "the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (3,6.15. 16; so also in 4,5). This is not only a title established exclusively in the non-priestly patriarchal narrative (Gen 31,29; 43,23; 49,25; 50,17; it is nowhere in P), it is a concept that depends on the reader's knowledge of God's relationship with the characters Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Further, when God refers in this chapter to Israel as "my people" (Exod 3,7.10; see also 5,1; 7,16.26, etc.), it presumes some grounds for God's relationship with this foreign populace in Egypt. Those grounds are nowhere provided in the exodus account; they derive only from the election of Abraham and his descendants in the patriarchal narrative.

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<sup>14</sup> In this regard the non-priestly story contradicts that of P, in which the Israelites have already multiplied (Gen 47,27).

<sup>15</sup> Schmid has noted that in the patriarchal accounts it is only P that refers to the patriarchs as *gērîm* in Canaan. He takes this as an indication that P is already foreshadowing the exodus by making the patriarchal family's stay in Canaan a temporary one. I am more inclined to read P's use of *gēr* in the patriarchal stories as P's recognition that the patriarchal family came to Canaan from elsewhere (as P describes in Gen 12,5). The term *gēr* is used to indicate a resident alien; it speaks to a person's origin, rather than their destination.

In the non-priestly plagues narrative, we find in two places reference to the fact that the Israelites dwell apart from the Egyptians, in the region of Goshen (Exod 8,18; 9,26). The location of the Israelites in Goshen is established exclusively in the non-priestly Joseph story (Gen 45,10, etc.), and that information can derive from nowhere else.

In Exod 32,26–29, we have the strange episode of the Levites slaying their kin in the camp<sup>16</sup>. Whatever we may make of this episode, it depends on the reader knowing who the Levites are: that there is a distinct group called the Levites and that they are related to the rest of the Israelite community. As no tribal distinctions have been made to this point in the non-priestly exodus account — it has referred only to Israel as a single nation — the use of the tribal term “Levite” must be based on the patriarchal narratives, which introduce Levi and his relationship with the rest of Israel. The same situation obtains with the introduction of Dathan and Abiram as Reubenites in the non-priestly account of their rebellion in Numbers 16. The tribes of Israel are established — in non-P just as in P — in the patriarchal account, and are assumed thereafter.

In Num 20,14–16, Moses sends a message to the king of Edom that begins with a brief recollection of how the Israelites came to be on the border of Edom’s territory: “You know all the hardships that have befallen us; that our ancestors went down to Egypt, that we dwelt in Egypt a long time, and that the Egyptians dealt harshly with us and our ancestors. We cried to the Lord and he heard our plea, and he sent a messenger who freed us from Egypt”. This historical survey, with its reference to the ancestors who went down to Egypt, presumes the continuity of the patriarchal and exodus narratives.

Ties to the patriarchal narrative are thus found in the account of the oppression of Israel, in the call of Moses, in the plagues, in the

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<sup>16</sup> As this narrative provides the explanation for the separation of the Levites to serve God, it cannot be from P: first, because the special status of the Levites is first proclaimed, by divine fiat, only in Numbers 3–4 and 8; second, and perhaps more importantly, because the idea that the Levites would be ordained to the priesthood (as the phrase *mil’û yedkem* in 32,29 means) is anathema to P’s worldview, in which it is only Aaron and his sons who may become priests. Furthermore, there is no aspect of the priestly narrative to which this episode can connect, as to this point in P the Israelites have not done anything remotely deserving of punishment.

departure from Egypt, in the episode at the mountain, and in the wilderness. Some of these ties are verbally explicit — references to the patriarchs by name, for example — while some simply exhibit what we might term casual dependence on the historical claims established in the preceding patriarchal narrative, such as the dwelling of the Israelites in Goshen. All, however, link the patriarchal and exodus narratives in the non-priestly text.

The call of Moses in Exodus 3 is, of course, the textual unit with the clearest and densest links to the patriarchal narratives in non-P, just as the functionally equivalent priestly passages in Exodus 1–6 contain the clearest and densest links to the priestly patriarchal narratives. Yet the ease with which the priestly text in Exodus 1–6 is held up as the supposedly original means of connecting the patriarchs and the exodus masks a rather remarkable facet of the priestly narrative. Outside of the connections in Exodus 1–6 described above, P nowhere explicitly links the patriarchs and the exodus. In none of the patriarchal narratives is there even so much as a single mention of Egypt in any context, much less any anticipatory allusion to the notion that the Israelites will some day find themselves there. In the priestly promise texts (just as in those classically assigned to non-P), the assignment of Canaan to the patriarchs is presented not as something to be fulfilled upon the Israelites' return from Egypt, but as something fulfilled in the lifetimes of the patriarchs: "I will give the land to you" (Gen 17,8); "that you may possess the land in which you are sojourning, which God gave to Abraham" (Gen 28,4); "the land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you" (Gen 35,12). Unlike non-P, in which the patriarchs move from town to town, building altars but not ever putting down any permanent roots, P repeatedly emphasizes that Abraham established a permanent holding in Canaan, the burial plot in the cave of Machpelah where he and the other patriarchs and matriarchs (with the exception of Rachel) are buried. While the non-priestly Joseph story ends with Jacob's family back in Egypt after the death and burial of Jacob (Gen 50,14.22.26), in the priestly narrative, the Joseph story ends with all of Jacob's family in Canaan, having laid Jacob to rest in the family plot at Machpelah (50,12-13). Read independently, one might be forgiven for concluding that it is actually the priestly narrative in Genesis that has no knowledge at all of the exodus to come; it neither prepares for it with explicit or implicit foreshadowing nor does it even narratively set the stage

for the Israelites being in Egypt where they will be enslaved. And after Exodus 1–6, there is no explicit reference in P to the patriarchs. Their names are never spoken; the promise to them is never mentioned<sup>17</sup>. The sole textual unit that explicitly links the patriarchs and exodus in P is Exodus 1–6.

We may take this opportunity to raise the issue of the promises to the patriarchs. It is frequently claimed that the non-priestly promises in Genesis are all secondary insertions, designed to link the various independent patriarchal texts into larger blocks. Even for scholars who hold this view, however, the introduction of the promises into the non-priestly patriarchal narrative is believed to have occurred before it was combined with P; that is, the promises are an integral part of the overarching non-priestly patriarchal account. The references back to the promises after Genesis, on the other hand, are generally taken to be even later additions, in part because they serve to connect the patriarchs and the exodus (and thus must be post-priestly), and in part because they are ostensibly modeled on the references to the promises found in D: as in D, the non-priestly promise texts in Exodus and Numbers refer almost exclusively only to the promise of land, not to the promise of increase. What has gone unobserved is that the very same distinction between the promises in Genesis and the promise texts after Genesis is found in P as well: in Genesis, the priestly promises always refer to both land and progeny, while in Exod 6,2 and 8 only the promise of land is mentioned. We thus have identical phenomena in the priestly and non-priestly promise passages: the disappearance of the promise of progeny after Genesis. Since the references to the promise in P are deemed original despite this shift between Genesis and Exodus, there is little reason why the promise texts in non-P should not be given the same consideration. Indeed, the same rationale serves to explain both the priestly and non-priestly (and

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<sup>17</sup> The most explicit reference to the patriarchal promises in a priestly text comes from Lev 26,42, and belongs firmly to H, not P. The single potential reference to the promise of the land after Exodus 6 in P is notable for its marked lack of specificity: “no one shall enter the land in which I swore to settle you” (Num 14,30); the text does not say that this oath was made to the patriarchs, either generally or by name, nor does it mention when this promise occurred — what’s more, there are no priestly promises in Genesis that are couched in oath language.

deuteronomic) disregard of the promise of progeny after Genesis: because the promise of progeny is fulfilled at the beginning of the exodus account, in both the priestly and non-priestly narratives, only the promise of land is left to be dealt with. Both P and non-P thus perfectly reflect the narrative situation, and neither requires any literary-critical explanation to make sense of its presentation of the promises. We may thus add to the list of non-priestly links between the patriarchs and exodus the references to the promise in Exod 32,13; 33,1; Num 11,12; 14,16.23; Deut 31,23; 34,4, and note again that these links back to the patriarchs are scattered throughout the non-priestly narrative, while in P they are confined to the beginning of the exodus account.

Comparison of the situation in P with that in non-P reveals a certain irony: the corpus with one single textual unit explicitly linking the patriarchs and exodus is considered to be the first narrative bridging the two into a unified whole, while the text with multiple, diverse, and frequently quite subtle links, scattered throughout the whole of the narrative, is considered to have originally been two separate pieces. This is not to suggest, of course, that the patriarchs and exodus were originally unconnected in P. As noted above, in a continuous document there is no pressing need to explicitly link the various textual units, as they are linked merely by virtue of being part of the same continuous story. P's decision to create a clear verbal link in Exodus 1–6 is a thematic and stylistic choice, one that fits well with P's style and ideology everywhere. In precisely the same way, non-P's diverse connections between the patriarchs and the exodus can be seen as elements of non-P's authorial technique. We have two corpora, describing the same history, but doing so in very different ways — both in the content of their narratives and in the style with which those narratives are presented.

### III. The concept of the post-priestly redaction

In order to maintain the argument that the non-priestly patriarch and exodus narratives were not originally part of a continuous literary work, every one of the aforementioned links between the two must be somehow removed from the original non-priestly text and ascribed to a post-priestly redactional layer — because if the priestly document was the first to connect the patriarchs and the exodus,

then every non-priestly connection between the two must have occurred after P by definition. There are a number of difficulties with this analysis, however.

We may first note the lack of consistency in the manner of these purportedly post-priestly additions. As noted above, some of these supposed linking passages are verbally explicit, with references to the patriarchs by name or with historical recollections of the descent into Egypt. It might be possible, under certain circumstances, to see such passages as interpolations designed to bridge the patriarchs and the exodus. Yet these types of links do not constitute the majority of the connective material. In order to attribute all of the above passages to a post-priestly redactor, we would have to imagine that he not only added explicit verbal links, but also inserted far more subtle elements: the description of the Israelites as strangers in Egypt in the naming of Moses's son and in the Covenant Code, as well as in Pharaoh's plans in Exodus 1; the introduction of tribal designations in Exodus 32 and Numbers 16; and the almost off-handed references to Goshen in the plagues narrative. Not only are these more subtle elements a strange way to accomplish the task, but they are themselves irregularly placed: for example, Goshen is referred to in only two of the non-priestly plagues, and the description of the Israelites as strangers occurs in only two of the laws of the Covenant Code and in the naming of Moses's son, a strange place to create a link if there ever was one. At the same time, the explicit verbal references to the patriarchs are equally irregular: in the call of Moses and in the message to Edom in the middle of Numbers, but nowhere else. Furthermore, none of these linking texts look the same from passage to passage; there is no consistency in the content or the form of the passages. If they are all attributable to a post-priestly redactor, he has changed his method of linking the patriarchs and exodus at virtually every turn.

More importantly, for a supposedly post-priestly redactional layer, these passages linking the patriarchs and exodus seem not only to ignore the historical claims of P, they often firmly contradict them. In Exod 1,8-12, Pharaoh's attempt to prevent the Israelites from multiplying is predicated on the fact that Israel is still but a relatively small group; yet according to P, the Israelites had already proliferated — finally and decisively, to the extent that they filled the land — in Exod 1,7 (and, in fact, already back in Gen 47,27). According to Exod 1,8-12, the Israelites multiply as a result of being enslaved, while in P the Israelites are enslaved as a result of having

multiplied (Exod 1,7.13-14). Pharaoh's plan in Exod 1,8-12 could not have been written with the priestly narrative in mind, much less been secondarily inserted after the priestly text of Exod 1,7.

In Exodus 3, God's self-description as "the God of your fathers" stands in contradiction to the priestly claim that God revealed himself to the patriarchs as El Shaddai (Exod 6,2) — P never uses the term "God of your fathers" in the patriarchal account. Indeed, the entirety of Exodus 3 — all of which has been deemed to be post-priestly — stands in opposition to the parallel priestly text of Exodus 6. According to Exodus 3, God speaks to Moses, announcing that he has heard the cry of the Israelites and will free them from Egypt, in Midian, whereas in P God speaks to Moses — announcing that he has heard the cry of the Israelites and will free them from Egypt — in Egypt; in Exodus 3, Moses is given clear instructions about whom to speak to and in what order, while in Exodus 6 he is given a distinctly different set of instructions; in Exodus 3, God refers to the Israelites as already being "my people", while in Exod 6,7, God proclaims that he will take Israel to be his people only after the redemption from Egypt. Exodus 3 does not depend on Exodus 6; it is written as if Exodus 6 did not exist.

The location of the Israelites in the separate territory of Goshen in the plagues narrative stands in contradiction to the priestly claim that Jacob's family originally settled in the territory of Rameses (Gen 47,11). According to the non-priestly Joseph story, the Israelites settle in Goshen, apart from the Egyptians, because they are shepherds, and shepherds are abhorrent to the Egyptians (Gen 46,34), while according to P they settle in Rameses because it is the best land in Egypt (47,11). The isolation of the Israelites in Goshen also contradicts the priestly claim that when the Israelites multiplied, they filled the land (Exod 1,7). This distinction is played out in the plagues narrative: according to the non-priestly story, the Israelites do not suffer from the plagues that strike the Egyptians because they live apart from them, but in the priestly plagues narrative the Israelites are intermingled with the Egyptians, such that they have to specially mark their houses so as to be spared from the death of the first-born. The emphasis on the Israelites living in Goshen thus creates two distinct inconsistencies with the priestly text.

The difficulty with these contradictions in the supposedly post-priestly passages is two-fold. First, they show neither agreement with nor even knowledge of the priestly texts on which they are purportedly based. This raises the question of what, precisely,



makes these passages post-priestly aside from the a priori argument that all texts connecting the patriarchs and exodus must postdate P. Second, they both render the priestly texts with which they disagree narratively problematic — that is, after reading Exodus 3 the story of Exodus 6 is confusing at best and nonsensical at worst — and, at the same time, undermine their own claims to narrative truth: presumably the author of Exodus 3 thought that the call of Moses happened in the way described there, but that depiction is deeply undercut by the subsequent priestly text of Exodus 6. The purportedly post-priestly canonical text does not present the post-priestly claims as the historical truth, because it also includes the contradictory priestly materials. (This is, of course, the difficulty with all supplementary models of the composition of the Pentateuch).

At the same time, these supposedly post-priestly passages agree entirely with the non-priestly text in which they are now embedded. These passages not only do not contradict the non-priestly historical claims as they do those of P, they also do not add anything new, priestly or otherwise, that was not already present in non-P. Furthermore, none of them narratively disrupt or otherwise stand out from their non-priestly contexts; there is no literary basis on which to consider them interpolations or secondary in any manner. They are completely in line with the non-priestly text; the most economical conclusion to draw from this is that they are in fact simply part of non-P.

Although stylistic considerations should always be secondary to the historical claims put forward in the text, it is not a small matter that the passages assigned to a post-priestly redactor follow the style of non-P throughout, and exhibit no signs of stylistic influence from P whatsoever. The phrase “all his brothers”, *kol-’ehāyw*, in Exod 1,6 appears five times in the non-priestly text of Genesis and nowhere in P; the description of the Israelites as “mighty”, *’āšûm*, in Exod 1,9 is found three other times in the non-priestly text, and never in P; the use of *hābâ* as an exhortative particle as in Exod 1,10 is unique to the non-priestly text; as noted above, in non-P the Israelites are described as *gērîm* in Egypt, beginning in Exod 2,22, but they are never so designated in P; the designation of the mountain of God as Horeb in Exod 3,1 is known only from the non-priestly narrative, while in P it is always known as Sinai; the divine messenger, *mal’āk*, in Exod 3,2 (and Num 20,16) appears frequently in non-P, and never in P (this is of course more than a

stylistic matter); the use of the cohortative with the particle *-nā'* as in Exod 3,3 and 18 is common in non-P, and completely absent from P; the repetition of a character's name in a divine address followed by the response *hinnēnî* as in Exod 3,4 — indeed, the use of *hinnēnî* as a response to an address in any context — occurs multiple times in non-P and never in P; the list of Canaanite nations in Exod 3,8 is found in various forms in the non-priestly text, but not once in P; the use of *l'kâ* (or the plural form, *l'kû*) as an exhortative preceding a volitive form as in Exod 3,10 is frequent in non-P but unattested in P. The list could go on, but the point should be clear enough: the purportedly post-priestly author writes in perfect non-priestly style. If stylistic considerations have any weight at all, in this case they are heavily tilted toward the identification of the supposed post-priestly writer with the non-priestly writer.

As already noted, the most significant block of text assigned to the post-priestly redactional layer is Exod 3,1–4,18. This raises the question, however, as to where the original non-priestly material may be found. It is argued that Exod 4,19–20 appear to be a good continuation of Exod 2,23aα; however, the ability to delete text and retain a sensible narrative is not a valid method for discerning layers. The issue is not whether the text immediately before and after 3,1–4,18 makes sense when this passage is removed, though; the issue is how much of the remaining non-priestly narrative is in fact directly reliant on the content of 3,1–4,18 in order to make sense. Exod 4,21–23, in which God refers to “all the marvels I have put within your power”, is entirely dependent on 4,1–17, as is 4,27–31, in which Moses relates to Aaron the details of his encounter with God in 3,1–4,17 and the two of them proceed to carry out the divine instructions. All of Exodus 5 follows from Moses and Aaron's demand in 5,1 and 3 that Pharaoh let the Israelites go worship God in the wilderness, thereby fulfilling God's command from 3,18; the same demand is made at every stage throughout the non-priestly plagues narrative. And so on. In short, to assign Exod 3,1–4,18 to a post-priestly redactional layer requires that virtually every subsequent part of the non-priestly story also be attributed to the same layer, since everything that follows depends on Exod 3,1–4,18. Why Moses is the spokesman for the Israelites, how he knows what to say to Pharaoh, why God is intervening to rescue the Israelites in the first place — these and many other questions would be left unanswered if Exod 3,1–4,18 did not stand at the head of the non-

priestly exodus narrative. And every additional bit of text that gets assigned to the post-priestly layer makes this problem more pressing: every passage that is removed from the non-priestly narrative takes with it the necessary introduction of elements required for comprehension of the subsequent passages.

Finally, there is the overarching question of how a post-priestly redactional layer may have come into being and functioned in the first place. Since the premise of the post-priestly layer is that it is aware of both the priestly and non-priestly texts, there are two possibilities: either the post-priestly material was added in the process of combining the priestly and non-priestly texts, or it was added after the priestly and non-priestly texts had already been combined. If the post-priestly material was added in the process of combining P and non-P, then we must wonder at the consistent contradictions between the post-priestly material and P. These contradictions do not contribute to the creation of a single canonical text; rather, they actively hinder it, by reinscribing the underlying inconsistencies between the two pre-existing corpora. If, on the other hand, the post-priestly material was added after P and non-P had already been combined, then we must ask how it is that these additions were made exclusively in the non-priestly text; after all, once P and non-P were combined, there was no longer a distinction between them (such a distinction would not re-emerge until the advent of modern critical scholarship). How could it be that the post-priestly redactor managed to make his changes in a variety of non-priestly texts across the Pentateuch while avoiding any contact with P — even in texts, such as the plagues narrative, in which P and non-P are closely interwoven? In both cases, there is one further question: Whether P and non-P were already combined or were in the process of combination, why would anyone feel the need to provide explicit, secondary links between the patriarchs and the exodus at all? Once the decision was made to combine P and non-P — even if non-P were originally two separate literary works — the result would be a text running continuously from the patriarchs into the exodus (and beyond on both ends). No reader would ever wonder if the patriarchs really led into the exodus, because the two would already be continuous in the combined P and non-P narrative, as they are today.

The passages that link the non-priestly patriarchal and exodus narratives — which demonstrate no knowledge of P, which contradict P regularly, and which are entirely in accord with the non-

priestly text — make the best sense, therefore, as part of an independent non-priestly text.

#### IV. Connections outside of P and non-P

A further challenge to the claim that P was the first to connect the patriarchs and the exodus comes from texts outside of P and non-P. There are a number of passages in the prophetic corpus that clearly know both the patriarchs and the exodus, and at times explicitly link the two into a single history. Since it is commonly claimed (rightly or wrongly) that P is a post-exilic work, any pre-exilic or exilic prophetic writings are particularly relevant to this discussion.

Hosea 12 contains numerous references to the Jacob story: to his birth (Hos 12,4), to his wrestling with the divine being (12,4-5), to his encounter with God at Bethel (12,5), to his time in Aram (12,13). The reference to Jacob serving time in Aram for his wife is followed directly by a reference to God bringing Israel out of Egypt (12,14), in a poetic line that links back to the previous verse through clever wordplay at the end of each line: *ûb<sup>e</sup> 'iššâ šāmār* (12,13bβ) // *ûb<sup>e</sup>nābî' nišmār* (12,14b).

Micah too demonstrates fairly detailed familiarity with both the exodus and the patriarchal stories. In Mic 6,4–5 we find reference to the exodus, complete with the names of Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, and to the Balaam episode. In Mic 7,15 the prophet asks that God may “show us wondrous deeds as in the days when you went out of Egypt”<sup>18</sup>. And at the end of the book, we read “You will keep faith with Jacob, loyalty to Abraham, as you promised on oath to our fathers in days gone by” (7,20).

In Jeremiah a very brief history of Israel is recounted, in Jer 32,20-23. It contains reference both to the exodus (“You freed your people Israel from the land of Egypt”, 32,21) and to the promise to the patriarchs (“You gave them this land that you had sworn to their fathers to give them”, 32,22). The subsequent chapter of Jeremiah again makes reference to the patriarchs, this time by name: “I will never fail to take from [David’s] offspring rulers for the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” (Jer 33,26).

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<sup>18</sup> Emending the Hebrew *'ar'ennû* to *har'ēnû* to better fit the sense of the passage.

It has long been recognized that Deutero-Isaiah builds his prophecies of Israel's return from exile on the pattern of the exodus. Yet Deutero-Isaiah also knows that the Israelites are descended from the patriarchs: "You, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, seed of Abraham, my friend". He makes clear mention of the patriarchal story: "Look back to Abraham your father, and to Sarah who brought you forth, for he was only one when I called him, but I blessed him and made him many" (Isa 51,2). In the next chapter, there is this: "Of old, my people went down to Egypt to sojourn there" (Isa 52,4). We thus find in Deutero-Isaiah, in addition to knowledge of the exodus narrative, the notion of Israel's origins in the patriarchs as well as the descent into Egypt.

While it is my belief that Ezekiel is dependent on P, for those scholars who date P to the post-exilic period Ezekiel necessarily predates P. Thus even the evidence from Ezekiel may be discussed here. It is hardly necessary to demonstrate that Ezekiel is familiar with the exodus, as Ezekiel 20 in its entirety is focused on the exodus narrative. Yet Ezekiel also integrates the patriarchs. In Ezek 16,3 we read, "By origin and birth you are from the land of the Canaanites". In Ezek 28,25 it is announced that Israel "shall settle on their own soil, which I gave to my servant Jacob". In Ezek 37,25 the prophet foretells that Israel "shall remain in the land which I gave to my servant Jacob". And perhaps most notably, in Ezek 33,23 the Israelites who remained in Canaan are said to have proclaimed "Abraham was but one man, yet he was granted possession of the land". In a variety of contexts, with a variety of references, the book of Ezekiel makes evident its familiarity with the patriarchal story in addition to its evident reliance on the exodus.

It may be claimed that all of these pre-priestly prophetic examples of the combination of the patriarchs and the exodus are in fact secondary additions to the original works. Yet there is no compelling reason to think that this is the case — other than the a priori belief that the patriarchs and exodus were kept entirely separate before P. It could also be argued that the prophets who refer to both the patriarchs and the exodus do not know them as a continuous story, but only as independent narratives; again, however, there is no obvious sign that this is the case — certainly Deutero-Isaiah, with the reference to Israel going down to Egypt, already considers the history to be continuous from the patriarchs to the exodus. Additionally, it is hard to imagine how an author could simultane-

ously hold two views of Israel's origins, especially when one, the patriarchs, clearly comes before the other. Finally, one could propose that none of the prophets know any existing text at all, but are, rather, building off common traditions about the patriarchs and the exodus. To my mind this is a promising solution — yet it is untenable for contemporary non-documentary scholarship, which has done away with the idea of pre-literary traditions altogether. Even if one did propose that the pre-priestly prophets, independent of any pre-existing text, combined the oral traditions of the patriarchs and the exodus, then there is no reason why the author of the non-priestly pentateuchal narratives could not have done the same.

It is admitted, of course, that the prophets refer far more frequently to the exodus than they do to the patriarchs, which might lead some to conclude that there was no established connection between the two. Yet we must keep in mind that the exodus story, with its themes of God's salvation of Israel and Israel's subsequent responsibility to obey God's commands, is far more relevant to the prophetic message than the patriarchal story. The extensive use of the exodus narrative in the prophets has everything to do with the nature of the prophetic message and nothing to do with the literary continuity or discontinuity of the exodus and patriarchal stories. This thematic argument is of course easiest to maintain if it is granted that the prophets knew only the patriarchal and exodus traditions, perhaps even independently, rather than that they knew a fixed written corpus that combined those traditions into a single narrative. Indeed (with the exception of Ezekiel), this seems most likely. Yet it should be noted that even after the fixing of the literary form of the narrative, even after the canonical Pentateuch had become authoritative, later authors wanting to appropriate its authority for their own rhetorical purposes have always picked and chosen those stories whose themes and theologies most closely matched their own: in the New Testament, for example, Paul in 2 Corinthians takes up the theme of the law-giving in chapter 3, and the theme of the garden of Eden quite separately in chapter 11; that he ignores the patriarchal narratives altogether in this letter is not a sign that he does not know the overarching narrative, but that certain parts of it are more rhetorically useful in certain situations.

Aside from the prophets, there is one more corpus of pre-exilic writing that significantly contributes to the discussion: D. It is entirely unnecessary to demonstrate that D knows the exodus story;

the question is whether D is also familiar with elements of the patriarchal narrative. In D's description of the Israelites' journey to the border of Canaan, the Israelites come to the land of Seir, which D identifies as "the territory of your kinsmen, the descendants of Esau" (Deut 2,4). Later in the same chapter, the Israelites are forbidden from engaging in battle with the Moabites and Ammonites, because those lands have been assigned to the descendants of Lot (2,9.19). These identifications of territory with Esau and Lot directly reflect the patriarchal narratives, in which the relationships between Israel and these neighboring nations are defined as familial along precisely these lines.

More pressing are the regular references to the promise to the patriarchs. Recent scholarship has proposed that the references in D to God's promise of the land to the "fathers" are not in fact references to the promise to the patriarchs, but rather to the generation of the exodus. This claim requires, of course, that in those passages in which the "fathers" are set in apposition with "Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" the names of the patriarchs be considered secondary additions. Yet there are a number of passages in D that clearly presume the patriarchal narrative in general and the promises to the patriarchs — and explicitly not to the generation of the exodus — in particular.

Despite the belief that the "fathers" in D represent the generation of the exodus, in fact the very notion that the generation of addressees is the second generation to come out of Egypt is a minority one in D. Only in the opening section of D, Deuteronomy 1–3, is the view expressed that the generation of the exodus perished in the wilderness (Deut 1,35; 2,14–15)<sup>19</sup>. Elsewhere the text is very clear that the generation that stood at Horeb is the same generation that is being addressed by Moses. In Deut 4,10–15 this is stated unequivocally: "The day you stood before the Lord your God at Horeb [...] you came forward and stood at the foot of the mountain [...] the Lord

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<sup>19</sup> The notion of the forty years of wandering is mentioned outside of these chapters, in Deut 8,2.4 and 29,4, but without any connection to punishment or death of a generation (in fact, Deuteronomy 29 is very clear that it is the same generation that came out of Egypt, wandered for forty years, and stands before Moses now). Rather, in these texts the forty years were a period in which God tested the Israelites who came out of Egypt to determine whether they were faithful or not, and in which God in turn demonstrated his capacity for preserving the Israelites in the face of danger.

spoke to you out of the fire [...] he declared to you the covenant[...] since you saw no shape at Horeb out of the fire [...]”. Later in the chapter the same idea is expressed: “as the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes [...] from the heavens he let you hear his voice” (Deut 4,34-36). And following directly on this identification of the current generation with that of the exodus, Moses states: “Because he loved your fathers, he chose their heirs after them; he himself, in his great might, led you out of Egypt”. If the addressees are the ones who came out of Egypt, as is clearly the case here, then “your fathers” can refer only to the patriarchs. So too in Deut 7,8: “It was because the Lord favored you and kept the oath he made to your fathers that the Lord freed you with a mighty hand and rescued you from the house of bondage”. Again, if Moses’s addressees were the ones whom God freed from Egypt, then the reference to “your fathers”, and the oath made to them, can refer only to the patriarchs and the patriarchal promises. And so again in Deut 29,12: “to the end that he may establish you this day as his people and be your God, as he promised you and as he swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob”. Two promises are described here: the promise to the generation of addressees, and the promise to their ancestors, the patriarchs. Even if the names of the patriarchs were not mentioned here, they are the only possible referent for “your fathers”, since the first promise described in Deut 29,12, “to you”, must refer to the generation of the exodus — the same generation that is standing in the plains of Moab. This conclusion is only bolstered by the beginning of this Mosaic speech, in 29,1: “You have seen all that the Lord did before your very eyes in the land of Egypt”. For the majority of Deuteronomy, it is assumed that the generation of the exodus did not die in the wilderness, but are the same generation that stands before Moses to receive the laws on the border of Canaan. Their fathers to whom God promised the land, therefore, can only be the patriarchs.

Additionally, although it is sometimes claimed that D refers only to the promise of land, this is not true. Certainly the vast majority of promise passages in D mention only the land, which is only sensible, since virtually all of D centers on the impending Israelite possession of the promised land. There are two, however, that refer to the promise of increase directly. In Deut 1,11, Moses says, “May the Lord, the God of your fathers, increase your numbers a thousandfold, and bless you as he has promised you”. And in Deut



13,18, in the law of *herem*, Moses says that for obeying the law God will “in his compassion increase you as he promised your fathers on oath”. These passages pose a fundamental challenge to the idea that D does not know of the patriarchs, since it is only in the patriarchal narratives that the promise of progeny is given.

In one deuteronomic passage the patriarchs are referred to without any mention of the promise: “Give thought to your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” (Deut 9,27); there can be no question of simply deleting the names of the patriarchs here, since the phrase “your servants” is used to refer almost exclusively to either the patriarchs or Moses (who is speaking)<sup>20</sup>. In two other D texts the descent into Egypt is mentioned: “Your ancestors went down to Egypt” (Deut 10,22), and, famously, “My father was a fugitive Aramean; he went down to Egypt with meager numbers and sojourned there” (Deut 26,5). As in Deutero-Isaiah, the idea that Israel went down to Egypt — especially using the word “sojourn” — presupposes Israel’s origins in Canaan, and thus the patriarchal narrative.

In short, there are numerous passages in D that clearly signal D’s knowledge of the patriarchs, of the promises made to them, and of their descent into Egypt. Even if, for the sake of argument, we grant that in many places the reference to God’s promise of land in fact could be intended to mean the promise to the generation of the Exodus, the existence of these other passages that cannot be so understood demonstrates D’s knowledge of the patriarchal and exodus narratives as a continuous whole. It may, once more, be argued that all of these deuteronomic texts are post-priestly insertions into D. But, again, these linking passages are scattered irregularly throughout D — in the first historical speech of Deuteronomy 1–3, in the rhetorical section of Deuteronomy 4, in the second historical speech of Deuteronomy 5–11, in the laws of Deuteronomy 12–26, in the speeches after the laws — and, again, there is no compelling reason to assign them all to secondary layers except as an attempt to keep all connections between the patriarchs and exodus out of the pre-priestly literature.

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<sup>20</sup> The sole exceptions are the use of the term to describe Caleb in Num 14,24, which has no relevance here, and the Israelite people as a whole in H, in Lev 25,42.55, which is later than D.

## V. The notion of independent narratives

In the end, we may consider the very basic question of whether independent non-priestly patriarchal and exodus narratives could in fact have existed in the first place. Taking the patriarchs first: it is difficult to imagine that the non-priestly patriarchal story could have stood on its own. The premise of the independent patriarchal narrative is that it would have been an account of how Israel came to possess the land of Canaan through the internal spread of Abraham's descendants, without any descent to Egypt, exodus, wilderness wandering, or conquest from without. Yet the patriarchal narrative does not tell that story. If the promises are included as part of the original non-priestly patriarchal narrative, then the text is certainly incomplete. At the end of the non-priestly patriarchal narrative, the Israelites are in Egypt, without any land of their own, and thus the promise of land is unfulfilled; furthermore, Israel comprises but a single family, of fewer than a hundred people by any reckoning, and thus the promise of progeny is similarly unfulfilled. Even if the promises are seen as secondary, however, the same problem persists. The non-priestly patriarchal account cannot function as a description of how the Israelites came to possess the land of Canaan. Unlike P, in which Jacob's family at least has one permanent land-holding at Machpelah, in non-P the patriarchal family never attains permanent possession of land. Rather, they move constantly from place to place, from generation to generation and even within single generations. Even if we discount the Joseph story, the non-priestly patriarchal narrative concludes not with any large-scale possession of land in Canaan, but rather with the entire family located in a single place (beyond Migdal-Eder; Gen 35,21–22). There is no acknowledgment anywhere in the non-priestly story that the patriarchal family has begun the process of attaining possession of the land.

Similarly, the non-priestly exodus narrative is incomplete on its own. It begins with the Israelite people enslaved in a foreign country — yet how did these foreigners get to Egypt? Who are they? Why does God care about them? The exodus narrative presumes that the reader knows the background to the exodus story. And that background is provided in the story of the patriarchs: the lineage of the family, their descent into Egypt, the establishment of their relationship with God.

The non-priestly patriarchal narrative demands some sort of continuation, in which it is described how the descendants of Jacob came

to fully possess the land. In other words, it demands a story like that of the exodus and conquest. At the same time, the exodus narrative demands some sort of introduction, in which it is described who the Israelites are, how they came to be a foreign nation within Egypt's borders, and why God considers them his people. In other words, it demands a story like that of the patriarchs. Each text is missing a crucial element — and that element happens to be perfectly well represented by the other text. It certainly seems the most economical solution to see the exodus account as the necessary continuation of the patriarchs, and the patriarchs as the necessary introduction of the exodus<sup>21</sup>. They are not separate texts, secondarily connected; they are a single narrative work, each dependent on the other, linked through disparate and scattered coherences of historical claim and style.

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#### SUMMARY

The question of the continuity of the non-priestly narrative from the patriarchs to the exodus has been the center of much debate in recent pentateuchal scholarship. This paper presents as fully as possible, in the space allowed, one side of the argument, namely, that the non-priestly narrative is indeed continuous from Genesis through Exodus. Both methodological and textual arguments are brought in support of this claim, as well as some critiques of the alternative theory.

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<sup>21</sup> Note that Schmid's comments below (p. 45-46) suggest that he takes an alternative view: that economy and simplicity of theory are not necessarily an indication of its likelihood.