Hagedorn, Anselm, and Henrik Pfeiffer, eds.

Die Erzväter in der biblischen Tradition: Festschrift für Matthias Köckert

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This Festschrift honors Matthias Köckert, and its title is a tribute to his contribution to the study of the book of Genesis and the patriarchal traditions.

The first essay, by Volkert Haas, “Ruinenstätten im hethitischen und akkadischen Schrifttum” (1–7), engages the theme of destruction of sinful cities by the gods and examines the use of this theme in the ancient Near East for over three thousand years. Hass points out that the presence of impressive ruins inspired etiological speculation regarding the offenses that warranted the destruction of cities in Akkadian and Hittite literature.

The contribution by Jan Christian Gertz, “Babel im Rücken und das Land vor Augen: Anmerkungen zum Abschluß der Urgeschichte und zum Anfang der Erzählungen von den Erzeltern Israels” (9–34), provides a thorough discussion of the story of Babel in Gen 11:1–9 directed at elucidating its aim as a self-contained literary unit and its purpose within its wider context. Gertz first examines the place of the Babel story within a self-standing primeval history. The primeval history reaches its climax and natural conclusion with the flood narrative, after which the Babel story is anticlimactic. This leads him to surmise that the aim of the Babel story relates to what will follow, rather than what came before. He then refutes the different arguments against the original unity of the Babel
story and shows how the two motifs—the dispersion of humankind and the confusion of languages—are inherent to the story and work together to build its theme and message. Gertz uncovers a web of cross-references between the Babel story and the other non-P and P materials in the primeval history. According to Gertz, this indicates that the story in Gen 11:1–9 was formulated for its context, after the combination of the P and non-P material. At the same time, Gertz finds that the theme of the Babel story, namely, settlement and dispersion from Babel, prepares the way for the introduction of Abraham’s exodus from Mesopotamia in Gen 12. Accordingly, the Babel story appears to have been composed to serve as a bridge between the primeval history and the patriarchal narratives.

Bob Becking examines the “sister-wife” stories (Gen 12:10–20; 20:1–18; 26:1–14) in “Abram in Exile: Remarks on Genesis 12, 10–20*” (35–47). He distinguishes between the events presumed by the narrative, the transmission of the narrative, and the sociohistorical context of the final form of the narrative. All three are aspects of tradition to which historical questions can be applied. As far as the events presumed by the narrative, Becking argues that they are at least partly based upon daily life experience in ancient Israel. With regard to the process of transmission, Becking concludes that the three “sister-wife” stories emerged through the combination of shared motifs rather than as successive revisions of a single tradition. Finally, Becking discusses the significance of the final form of the tradition in Gen 12:10–20 against the historical context of the period of the exile, during which an audience would likely identify with the figure of the patriarch in exile who lives by his wiles and eventually returns from exile.

The next essay, Eckart Otto’s “Abraham zwischen JHWH und Elohim: Zur narrativen Logik des Wechsels der Gottesbezeichungen in den Abraham-erzählungen” (49–65), proposes to uncover the narrative logic behind the changes in divine designations in the primeval history as well as in the Abraham narratives. The problem addressed by Otto goes beyond the existence of doublets that utilize different divine designations and the contradiction between Exod 3:13–15; 6:3; and Gen 4:26 regarding the origin of YHWH’s cult. Otto’s survey of the history of research on this question highlights how the lack of consensus erodes the validity of source or redaction analysis that is based upon interchange in divine designation. Otto contends that diachronic analysis has not successfully explained the final form of the text, since it denies the scribes of the Pentateuch the standing and responsibility of authors. Otto holds that contradictions and tensions within the complete text would be as evident to authors and audiences in ancient times as they are to modern readers and that successive revision tends to smooth inconsistencies rather than create them. Therefore, Otto proposes a synchronic interpretation of the interchange in divine designations that views them as a purposeful means for representing different perspectives—that of narrated time within the text and
that of external *narration time* relating to world of the author and/or audience—rather than as haphazard editorial inconsistencies. Otto’s proposal presents an intriguing interpretive strategy for the final form of the text that might even reflect how third-century B.C.E. audiences actually read the extended pentateuchal narrative. However, it ultimately fails to provide a compelling explanation of the major problems with the interchange of divine designations, such as, why, within the non-P Abraham narratives, the designation Elohim is virtually limited to Gen 20–22 and not more evenly distributed. Or why Otto’s post-P author of the Eden narrative 1 would add the name YHWH instead of continuing along the lines of P’s use of Elohim in Gen 1.

Konrad Schmid discusses the issue of inclusivity versus exclusivity of the covenant with Abraham according to P, in his essay “Gibt es eine ‘abrahamitische Ökumene’ im Alten Testament? Überlegungen zur religionspolitischen Theologie der Priesterschrift in Genesis 17” (67–92). This question comes to the fore in Gen 17, since there P states in verse 7 that God establishes his covenant with Abraham and his descendants for all time, while verses 19, 21 appear to restrict the covenant relation to Isaac’s line alone. Schmid’s survey of previous research underscores the ambiguity of Gen 17 and illustrates how preconceptions and change in method contribute to the lack of scholarly consensus. His own close reading of Gen 17 indicates that P includes all of Abraham’s progeny within the covenant, whose substance consists of both the land promise as well as multiplication of seed. The land promise is based upon P’s conception of “greater Canaan” that overlaps the boundaries of the province of *Eber-nāri* (the land beyond the river [Euphrates]), within whose confines all of Abraham’s descendants dwell. Schmid proposes an ingenious solution to the apparent inconsistency between verse 7 and verses 19, 21 by demonstrating that 17:19, 21 are an inclusio, and therefore verse 21 is simply in conjunction with the preceding verses and should not be viewed as an adversative statement ("*but* my covenant..."). According to Schmid, the reason for the emphasis placed upon Isaac by means of the inclusio in verses 19, 21 is the need to specify that Isaac also will be part of the covenant, even though he is not yet born. Indeed, P ultimately does distinguish between the divine covenantal relations between Jacob’s descendants and those that apply to the rest of Abraham’s family; however, this distinction does not come to the fore in Gen 17 but in other P texts that depict Jacob’s descendants as a nation of priests set apart by their participation in YHWH’s cult. According to Schmid, Gen 17 sets the limits for connubium that include Arabs (Ishmael), Edom (Esau), as well as Samaria

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(Israel) and Judah (Jacob) (84), and thereby reflects the sociopolitical realities of Persian period Yehud.

Karin Schöpflin’s “Abrahams Unterredung mit Gott und die schriftgelehrte Stilisierung der Abrahagestalt in Gen 18,16b–33 (93–113) presents a thorough close reading of the theological discourse that connects the two visits of divine messengers in Hebron and in Sodom (Gen 18:1–15; 19:1–29). Schöpflin’s article not only presents a thorough summary of interpretative issues along with a careful synchronic intertextual reading, but it also builds upon newer insights that contribute to elucidating the aim of the passage and the context of its composition. For example, Schöpflin points out that Abraham never refers to the city under discussion by name and instead uses the generic term “the city” (Gen 18:28 העיר) or the vague designation “the place” ( helyom Gen 18:24). However, as Schöpflin points out, helyom also carries the connotation of cult site. Accordingly, Schöpflin suggests that the implied subject of Abraham’s intercession is actually Jerusalem and its temple. Schöpflin further finds that the passage depicts Abraham as a forerunner of Moses who combines different characteristics in one figure: God’s chosen confidant, prophet, teacher of righteousness and justice, and intercessor. Consequently, Schöpflin suggests that Gen 18:16b–33 not only builds upon the figure of Moses but was composed at a late stage when it was conceivable to build a stylized alter ego who might even compete with the original Moses figure.

The essay by Reinhard G. Kratz, “‘Abraham, mein Freund’: Das Verhältnis von inner- und außerbiblischer Schriftauslegung” (115–36), focuses on the designation אביו אברם, “Abraham my friend,” as a test case for evaluation the reception history of the Abraham traditions. This designation is found only twice in the Hebrew Bible, in Isa 41:8 and 2 Chr 20:7, and both contexts draw upon a deep well of intertextual references, thus indicating the late stage of this development within the reception history of the Abraham traditions. Nevertheless, this title and its attending ideas became prevalent in extrabiblical Jewish literature as well as in Christian tradition (116–19), showing how later interpretation picks up on specific motifs within the evolving Abraham tradition that then take on a life of their own. As Kratz demonstrates, the broad range of intertextual references, within both the biblical sources and those from Qumran that depict Abraham as the one who loves YHWH, provides the basis for viewing Abraham as a model for observance of divine law. In the remaining portion of the essay Kratz investigates the reception history at Qumran of the sister-wife stories (Gen 12:10–20; 20:1–18; 26:7–14) and divine promises to Abraham and his seed (Gen 12:1–3; 15; 17), where he finds the same tendency to interpret the figure of Abraham as “friend of YHWH.” Finally, Kratz notes how the same interpretative strategy is at work in the section dealing with Abraham in “The Praise of the Fathers” (Sir 44:19–21), where the poet draws upon varied materials from the final form of Genesis to depict a model father of nations who keeps divine
commandments, withstands trials, and therefore is rewarded with God’s covenant and promise of land for him and the line of his son Isaac. The song in “Praise of the Fathers,” Kratz suggests, might represent an intermediate stage in the reception of the Abraham traditions, between the biblical sources and the interpretative material from Qumran.

The essay by Anselm C. Hagedorn, “Hausmann und Jäger (Gen 25,27–28): Aus den Jungendtagen Jakobs und Esaus” (137–57), deals with the reception history of the characterization of Esau, the red and hairy huntsman, and sedentary Jacob, who dwells in his tent rather than on the steppe. Hagedorn bases his study of the duality represented by the twins (wild nature versus civilization) upon comparative sources—mostly from the Hellenistic sphere—and upon cultural anthropology.

Uwe Becker undertakes a new investigation into the history of the traditions relating to Jacob and the cult sites of Bethel, Shechem, and Penuel in his essay, “Jakob in Bet-El und Sichem” (159–85). He rightly rejects the source-critical model and employs redaction-critical tools with rigor to uncover the original compositional layer and separate it from redactional strata and revisional reworking. He finds that Bethel does not belong to the ancient core of the Jacob traditions but was introduced into them at a late stage in the development of the narrative cycle, when Bethel enjoyed renewed prestige in the wake of Jerusalem’s decline during the Babylonian and early Persian periods. Given the geographic proximity between Bethel and Jerusalem (and, one might also add, the similar status as royal shrines), Becker suggests that the Jacob in Bethel narratives are designed to evoke a comparison with the Jerusalem temple, implying that Bethel (and not Jerusalem) is truly the “House of God.” Within the Jacob cycle, Bethel is disassociated from the iconic and heterodox cult practices that characterize Bethel in the book of Kings and in the prophetic literature, and, instead, the foreign gods (with intertextual references to Exod 32:2) are transferred from Bethel to Shechem and deposited there under the terebinth that Josh 24:26 locates within the sacred precincts of YHWH’s temple (Gen 35:2–4). Here Becker finds hints of an anti-Samaritan polemic stemming from a time when Bethel and Gerizim competed for primacy, before the restoration of the Jerusalem temple.

John Barton’s “Jacob at the Jabbok” (187–95) is a holistic discussion of Jacob’s encounter with the mysterious divine being at the Jabbok that examines the story in the light of structural and poststructural analysis. Here the duality of the divine figure—as both helper and opponent—seemingly flies in the face of the structural rules for the folktale presumed to lie behind this story. This difficulty might be reconciled in theological terms, according to which emergent monotheism attaches both good and evil attributes to a single figure who is depicted as both helper and opponent at one and the same time. But Barton suggests that the distinction between the Hebrew Bible and its ancient Near
Eastern context is first and foremost literary and appeals to Erich Auerbach’s well-known essay on the comparative poetics of Homer and the Hebrew Bible for the idea “that monotheism is not so much the cause of the peculiarities of Hebrew narrative as its result” (193).

Steven L. McKenzie argues in “Tamar and Her Biblical Interpreters” (197–208) that the story of Tamar in Gen 38 was devised to counter claims for endogamy, since it relates the clans of Judah to a “mother” of “Canaanite” origin. McKenzie suggests that the story in part builds upon the differences between two priestly tribal lists in Gen 46 and in Num 26, thereby establishing the late context for the composition of Tamar’s story. The fact that that the Chronicler employed material that derives directly from Gen 38 implies that he was not only familiar with the material but also cognizant of the inclusivistic tendencies of the story.

The debate over the nature of the qedešim in the Hebrew Bible is the topic of the essay by Hermann-Josef Stipp, “Die Qedešen im Alten Testament” (209–40). Stipp reviews the history of the cult-prostitute thesis, which he rightly rejects, then undertakes a thorough investigation of the different contexts in which women or men are designated as qedešim. In at least three contexts (Gen 38; Deut 23:18; Job 36:14), he argues, the term unequivocally designates profane prostitution, while in other contexts the term appears to designate some sort of heterorthodox cultic functionary whose duties are not clear. However, nowhere do the biblical texts claim that they were active in non-Yahwistic cults, and where they do appear as cult functionaries, they are not explicitly represented as engaging in cultic sex or cultic prostitution. Stipp suggests that these functionaries may have led a rather equivocal personal lifestyle that gave rise to polemical representation and interpretation of their sexual habits within the biblical texts.

The contribution by Hans-Christoph Schmitt, “Erzvätergeschichte und Exodusgeschichte als konkurrierende Ursprungslegenden Israels—ein Irrweg der Pentateuchforschung” (241–66), undertakes to reexamine the thesis that has enjoyed recent popularity, that the patriarchal traditions and exodus tradition stem from competing origin traditions and were first combined in the Priestly edition of the Torah. Schmitt reviews the basis for the thesis as argued by scholars such as Thomas Römer and Konrad Schmid and attempts to systematically refute their arguments. Schmitt ultimately recognizes the fact that the

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3. See, e.g., Thomas Römer, Israels Väter: Untersuchungen zur Väterthematik im Deuteronomium und in der deuteronomistischen Tradition (OBO 99; Fribourg: Universitätsverlag, 1990); Konrad Schmid, Genesis and the Moses Story: Israel’s Dual Origins in the Hebrew Bible (trans. J. D. Nogalski; Siphrut 3; Winona Lake,
patriarchal and exodus traditions stem from originally independent blocks of tradition, but he holds that the literary traditions before us are not only pre-Priestly in origin but that they presume one another and were already combined in the pre-Priestly stage, plausibly in the late eighth through seventh centuries B.C.E. Unfortunately, Schmitt does not introduce new arguments or a new approach to the problem (such as linguistic analysis or sociohistorical analysis) and instead subjects the texts to the same type of literary analysis that had produced opposite results by Römer and Schmid.

Henrik Pfeiffer, in “Sodomie in Gibea: Der kompositionsgeschichtliche Ort von Jdg 19” (267–89), agrees with Hans-Winfried Jüngling that Judg 19 comprises the original core of the Gibeah story and that it is earlier than Judg 17–18.4 However, Pfeiffer rejects the idea that the story was conceived as an independent narrative and rightly argues that it was initially composed for its larger context between two historiographic blocks, the “Volksgeschichte” in Exodus–Joshua and the history of the monarchies in Samuel–Kings. So, too, Pfeiffer rightly rejects the notion that Judg 19 is pre-Deuteronomistic in origin and that it influenced Gen 19. Unfortunately, Pfeiffer’s argumentation is based mainly upon inconclusive literary critical criteria. Although I agree in the main with his conclusions regarding the historical context for the composition of the Gibeah story, I think his case would be stronger if he examined the text for traces of Late Biblical Hebrew5 and if he had applied stringent criteria in examining the parallel texts that establish not only the literary dependence between the texts but also its direction. Pfeiffer ultimately interprets the purpose of the story on the basis of Judg 19 alone, since he holds that only this section made up the original story. Here he finds that the antithetical analogy between the hospitality the Levite experienced in Bethlehem and in Gibeah alludes to the two kings associated with these two towns and accordingly concurs with those who rule that the story was devised as an anti-Saulide polemic. Indeed, there is no doubting the polemical nature of the story. Nonetheless, I wonder whether its barbs are directed specifically against Saul. I doubt that the base narrative of the Gibeah story is limited to Judg 19, since it lacks an appropriate conclusion, while the apparent change in style between Judg 19 and 20–21 is readily explained by the greater extent of literary borrowing in Judg 19 from the pool of classical texts. In fact, verbal allusions to the story of Saul comprise a small fraction of the literary allusions in Judg 19, whose intertexts


include at least 2 Sam 13; Deut 22; Gen 18; 24, along with those mentioned by Pfeiffer. Last but not least, I am left wondering what specific historical context Pfeiffer might propose for the composition of this story, since this question was only vaguely addressed. Indeed, there are good reasons to conclude that the story is post-Deuteronomistic in origin, but against what background would a post-Deuteronomistic scribe need to compose a hidden anti-Saulide polemic, when the final form of the Saul story sufficiently castigates him?

Erhard Blum bases his discussion of Hos 12, in “Hosea 12 und die Pentateuchüberlieferungen” (291–321) upon a close reading of Hos 12:3–15. His analysis leads him to conclude that Hos 12:3–15 is basically a literary unity, even though it has undergone some limited glossing and expansion. Accordingly, he finds that both the Jacob and exodus traditions play a role in the unit and are necessary to its message. Blum’s interpretation of verses 12–13 provides the basis for his ruling that the unit addresses an audience familiar with the events of the latter third of the eighth century B.C.E. This has further implications for the history of the pentateuchal traditions. The relative stability of the Jacob tradition(s) as reflected in Hos 12 seems to presume that a Jacob cycle had already took on literary form prior its use by Hosea. Similarly, Blum’s reading of Hos 12:14 leads him to conclude that Hosea and his audience were already familiar with the characterization of Moses as a prophet, even though this characterization was introduced into the Pentateuch at a relatively late stage. Since the bringing up הָעָלָה from Egypt (to Canaan; v. 14) is also inherent to this unit, Blum finds that the Jacob and exodus-Moses traditions were already combined and presumed by audiences in the late eighth century. In Blum’s opinion, the unit deals not with conflicting origin traditions but with false presumptions held by the target audience on the basis of the religious norms conveyed by the traditions cited. Finally, Blum carefully points out that the familiarity on the part of Hosea and his audience with core pentateuchal traditions certainly does not imply the existence of early literary pentateuchal sources.

Markus Witte’s contribution, “Jakob der Gerechte—Beobachtungen zum Jakobsbild der Sapientia Salominis (Sap 10,10–12)” (323–45), shows how the equivocal figure of Jacob that arises from the traditions in the Hebrew Bible was transformed into a righteous archetype by the author of Wis 10:10–12 and other texts outside the Hebrew Bible canon.

Rudolf Smend continues his work on the intellectual biographies of leading biblical scholars with his essay, “Franz Delitzsch—Aspekte von Leben und Werk” (347–66). In light of the portrait Smend draws of Delitzsch, who devoted himself to the study of the

Hebrew Bible and classical Jewish sources, one can only speculate how father Franz might have reacted to the Babel-Bibel controversy sparked by the famous lecture given by his son Friedrich a decade after the father’s death.


As is frequently the case, this Festschrift is a mixed lot in terms of subject, historical context, and methodological approach. While the theme of the patriarchal traditions imposes a degree of editorial unity upon the volume, the constituent essays treat a period spanning from the second millenium B.C.E., in Haas’s opening essay, to the late nineteenth century C.E., in the penultimate essay by Smend. We are also treated to a variety of approaches, including extra- and inner-biblical comparative studies (Haas, Kratz, Hagedorn, Stipp, Witte), diachronic exegesis (Gertz, Schmid, McKenzie, Pfeiffer, Schmitt, Blum), synchronic exegesis (Otto), close reading (Schöplin), redaction criticism (Becker), and (post)structuralism (Barton). Accordingly, different essays will appeal more to different sets of readers, as is perhaps clear from my own reading of this volume.