WORDS, IDEAS, WORLDS

WORDS, IDEAS, WORLDS

BIBLICAL ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF YAIRAH AMIT

Edited by

Athalya Brenner and Frank H. Polak

SHEFFIELD PHOENIX PRESS

2012

Contents

ABBREVIATIONS

AASF	Annales Academiae scientiarum fennicae
AASOR	Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research
AB	Anchor Bible
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
ADPV	Abhandlungen des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins
AnOr	Analecta Orientalia
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
BA	*Biblical Archaeologist*
BASOR	*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
BEAJT	Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des antiken Judentums
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium
BibInt	*Biblical Interpretation*
BM	*Beit Mikra*
BN	*Biblische Notizen*
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
BWAT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten Testament
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CAD	Ignace I. Gelb et al. (eds.), *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago* (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1964–)
CANE	J. Sasson (ed.), *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* (4 vols. New York: Scribners, 1995)
CAT	Manfred Dietrich, Oswald Loretz, Joaquin Sanmartín (eds.), *The Cuneiform Alphabetic texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani and Other Places* (Abhandlungen zur Literatur Alt-Syrien-Palästinas 8; Munster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1995)
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
DJD	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert
DSD	*Dead Sea Discoveries*
ETL	*Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses*
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FOTL	Forms of the Old Testament Literature
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HKAT	Handkommentar zum Alten Testament
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs

HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
ICC	International Critical Commentary
ITL	International Theological Library
JAB	*Journal for the Aramaic Bible*
JANER	*Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions*
JANES	*Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JJS	*Journal of Jewish Studies*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series
JSS	*Journal of Semitic Studies*
KAI	H. Donner and W. Röllig, *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften* (3 vols.; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1962–64)
KHAT	Kurzer Hand-commentar zum Alten Testament
KTU	Manfred Dietrich, Oswald Loretz, Joaquin Sanmartín (eds.), *Die Keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit: einschliesslich der Keilalphabetischen Texte ausserhalb Ugarits* (Alter Orient und Altes Testament 24; Kevelaer: Butzon und Bercker; Neukirchen–Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1976)
LHBOTS	Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
OBO	Orbis biblicus et orientalis
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTS	Old Testament Studies
RBL	*Review of Biblical Literature*
SAAS	State Archives of Assyria Studies
SBLSCS	Society of Biblical Literature Septuagint and Cognate Studies
SBLSemSt	Society of Biblical Literature Semeia Studies
SBLWAW	Society of Biblical Literature Writings from the Ancient World
STDJ	*Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah*
TSK	*Theologische Studien und Kritiken*
UF	*Ugarit-Forschungen*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	Vetus Testamentum, Supplements
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
ZA	*Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZDPV	*Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins*

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Ehud Ben Zvi, University of Alberta

Athalya Brenner, Tel Aviv University/University of Amsterdam

Diana Edelman, University of Sheffield

Cynthia Edenburg, Open University of Israel

J. Cheryl Exum, University of Sheffield

Yael S. Feldman, New York University

Edward L. Greenstein, Bar Ilan University

Lillian Klein Abensohn, American University, Washington

Israel Knohl, Hebrew University, Jerusalem

Nadav Na'aman, Tel Aviv University

Frank H. Polak, Tel Aviv University

Meira Polliack, Tel Aviv University

Dalit Rom-Shiloni, Tel Aviv University

Shulamit Valler, Haifa University

WHEN AN EXPLICIT POLEMIC INITIATES A HIDDEN ONE: JACOB'S ARAMAEAN IDENTITY*

Dalit Rom-Shiloni

1. *Introduction*

Jacob's parting from Laban the Aramaean in Genesis 31 is at face value the last segment that completes the Jacob-Laban cycle. However, the story re-examines Jacob's long stay in Haran, and in its fifty-five verses (31.1–32.1) it actually revises earlier stories and suggests an alternative description of events.[1] This essay examines the literary evidence presented in Genesis 31: first, in comparison to its place within the earlier Haran chapters (Genesis 29–30); and second, as part of a larger controversy regarding the national identity of Jacob, who is designated as 'a wandering Aramaean' in Deut. 26.5,

ארמי אבד אבי וירד מצרימה
ויגר שם במתי מעט ויהי שם לגוי גדול עצום ורב

'My father was a fugitive Aramean. He went down to Egypt with meager numbers and sojourned there; but there he became a great and very populous nation',[2]

and whose 'Aramaean' genealogy is transparent in Genesis (24; 25.19-20; 27.46–28.9). Thus, following Yairah Amit's contributions to the study of

1.   Genesis 31 was recognized mostly as Elohistic, with verses or parts of verses that scholars felt were duplicates, and thus were designated as Yahwistic (vv. 1, 3, 19a, 21-23, 25b, 27, 31, 36a, 38-40, 44, 46, 48, 51-53a). Verse 18a2-b was classified as Priestly, along with additional glosses within vv. 10, 12, 24, 29b, 42, 47, 48b-49, 51-53a. See Gunkel 1997: 331-42 and compare to Westermann (1995: 489-99), who accentuated the special position and unity of Genesis 31 in the context of the Haran stories. Westermann found the chapter to be Yahwistic, with no Elohistic level at all, but with necessary non-Yahwistic additions. On the function of ch. 31 as a completion of the previous Haran chapters, see Fokkelman 1975: 157-62; Fishbane 1975: 30-31. I will argue below that the chapter has been written by one single author, different from that of chs. 28–29; and see also n. 6.

2.   The translation of biblical verses follows the NJPS Tanakh.

biblical polemics, and using sociological methods to explore the dynamics of group identity, I wish to add another example to the long list of hidden polemics in biblical literature, on the topic of Jacob's debated Aramaean origin; in fact, I will suggest that this hidden polemic arises from another, explicit one.

2. *Genesis 31 as a 'Composition Variant'*

In his studies of the Abraham stories, John Van Seters designated an essential feature of the 'composition variant' as the literary dependence of one literary work on another. Van Seters thus explained doublets in the Abraham stories as the result of an oral, and later written, process of transformation of the traditions, wherein later authors borrowed and revised earlier stories (1975: 162-64, 167-83). Applying these observations to the Jacob cycle, I propose that we view Genesis 31 as such a 'composition variant', for while it is completely dependent upon chs. 29–30, it counters many of the fundamental perceptions of those earlier chapters.

An important feature of these stories is their characterization of the main figures. Jacob's figure is constructed in reference to two spheres: his intrapersonal relationship with Laban, and his relationship with God. In Genesis 25–28, Jacob's relationship with Esau is governed by the themes of cheating and deception; the Haran stories of chs. 29–30 add to this portrait further elements of trickery and deception, though here practiced by both Laban and Jacob.[3] Genesis 31, by contrast, suggests a very different portrait of Jacob. The Jacob of this chapter is faultless; no trace of any deceitful action or trickery on his part mars his relationship with Laban. Jacob's speech to his wives summarizing his stay with Laban (vv. 6-7), the alternative version of the story of the increase in the flocks (vv. 8-13), and Jacob's tough counteraccusation of Laban (vv. 38-42), put Jacob's stay in Haran in a completely different light than do chs. 29–30.[4] We meet Jacob here as the devoted and loyal worker, the one who has taken pains beyond the call of duty to preserve and increase his employer father-in-law's herds (31.38-40). Laban, on the contrary, has acted consistently as a ruthless employer, deceiving Jacob throughout the entire period and changing his wages time and again (vv. 41-42).[5]

---

3. Nahum M. Sarna says: 'The perpetrator of deception is now the victim, hoist with his own petard' (Sarna 1989: 398).

4. Westermann (1995: 491) explained the differences between the stories as the result of Jacob's distinctive goal in addressing his wives. Based on similar arguments, however, Hamilton (1995: 288-289) harmonized the two descriptions. In the following discussion, I find the stories to be significantly different; this difference is the result of a purposeful revision made by a later author.

5. The Jacob–Laban relationship is set out in vv. 38-42 by means of terms known from Ancient Near Eastern herdsmen contracts, concerning the commitments of herdsmen

Moreover, Genesis 31 suggests a different assessment of the power relations between the two main figures. Genesis 29–30 illustrates the transfer of power from Laban, who at first governs Jacob's life in all respects (29.15-30), to Jacob who controls their second set of working terms and initiates his eventual departure (30.25-43). Genesis 31.5-9, however, rules out Jacob's active role in his relationship with Laban. Instead, God enters the Laban–Jacob relationship. In Genesis 31 Jacob is passive in the face of the divine direction of every step in his life. Jacob indeed has been the devoted worker, but he does not initiate the departure (contra 30.25): it is a divine command (31.3, 13) given immediately after the description of the explicit hostility manifested towards Jacob by Laban and his sons (31.1-2).[6] In similar fashion, the increase of the herds is depicted in ch. 30 as the result of interventions by Jacob, the highly trained herdsman, aided by magic (30.31-43); the alternative description in ch. 31 features God as the agent who acted to circumvent Laban's attempt to cheat Jacob (31.7), thus effecting a miracle subsequently revealed to Jacob in a dream (vv. 10-13).[7]

In the sphere of Jacob's relationship with God, Jacob of ch. 31 is the pious obedient person who constantly recognizes God's favorable involvement with him (Fokkelman 1975: 159-62). Chapter 31 accentuates God's role in saving Jacob from Laban (31.7, 24, 29, 42), a point not mentioned in the Jacob–Laban relationship of chs. 29–30, where divine assistance is related only to the economic wealth Laban has acquired (30:27, 30).[8] Chapter 31 illustrates recognition on the part of the narrator (v. 24), and even Laban (v. 29), of divine involvement on Jacob's behalf; but this is most explicitly acknowledged by Jacob himself in his speech to his wives (vv. 5-13) and in his counteraccusation of Laban (v. 42). This recognition indicates an important difference between ch. 31 and the preceding chapters. This is the point where ch. 31 looks back and revises/corrects the trilateral relationship between God, Jacob and Laban, emphasizing, on the one hand, Jacob's devotion to Laban over the years, and on the other hand, the constant guidance by divine providence that time and again has saved Jacob from Laban

towards herd owners; see Finkelstein 1968: 30-36. Accordingly, Jacob's speech distinguishes between his commitments (vv. 38-39) and those of Laban (vv. 40-42), emphasizing the exceptions to the norm; thus there is no reason to divide these verses between diverse literary sources.

6.   In vv. 2-3 the author depicts the opposition between Laban's negative attitude toward Jacob (והנה איננו עמו) and God's support of him (ואהיה עמך; Hamilton 1995: 289).

7.   In 30.39 and 31.10, 12 the circumstances (the time of the mating of the flocks) and the results are similar (except for the difference in detail between טלאים and ברדים). The major difference is the implement: Jacob's placement of the rods in the troughs (30.39) versus a divine act that thwarts Laban's deception (31.8). Thus, in the second telling, human magic is transformed into a divine miracle.

8.   On references to God in the birth stories of Jacob's sons, see below.

(v. 42). Moreover, in comparison to other stories within the Jacob cycle, Genesis 31 is exceptional in that the divine involvement on his behalf is not connected to any cultic action taken by Jacob.[9] According to ch. 31 Jacob has merited unrestricted divine protection.

Finally, Jacob's pious portrayal gains further force from the allusions to Abraham.[10] Like Abraham, Jacob receives a divine command to go to Canaan, which in his case means to return to the land of his forefathers (31.3); but instead of Abraham's immediate and unhesitating emigration, the description of Jacob's departure from Haran features an elaborate account of Jacob's consultation with Rachel and Leah (vv. 4-16). This elaboration in Genesis 31 serves a central role in the departure story, as it contains four components that stand in clear distinction from chs. 29–30: (1) an alternative description of the Jacob–Laban relationship (vv. 5-9, contrast 30.25-31); (2) an alternative description of the increase in the herds (vv. 5-13, as against 30.31-43); (3) the dream revelation (vv. 1-13); (4) the wives' response (vv. 14-16). These components are brought together in a significantly different account of the Haran episode: Jacob's character is redrawn and purified in relationship to both Laban and God, even as these verses put a stain on Laban's character. The dialogue with the women is highly apologetic, answering the unspoken protest against the sources of Jacob's wealth (31.1); at the same time, it aims to smooth the offense against family laws caused by Jacob's flight from Haran. This leads to a different assessment of divine involvement on Jacob's behalf: according to ch. 31 the actual struggle is between God and Laban, while Jacob is only a passive onlooker (vv. 7b-12). Rachel and Leah's

9.   Compare to descriptions of Jacob as a pious person who receives a divine revelation in Beth El (28.10-22; 35.1, 9-12); at the time of his prayer before his meeting with Esau (32.9-12); and at the time of God's revelation to him in Beer Sheva, prior to his descent to Egypt (46.1-4). In these stories, either before or after the revelation, Jacob establishes cultic sites (28.18; 35.7, 14); offers sacrifices (46.1); rids his camp of alien gods (35.1); and prays. Chapter 31 does not belong to this pattern.

10.   This schematization of the direction of the literary borrowing, from the earlier Abraham stories to Genesis 31, is based on two arguments. First, the two major components of לֶךְ לְךָ—the initial contact between God and Abraham and the first immigration to Canaan—do not match the story of Jacob's return from Haran, because God had already revealed Himself to him (28.10-20) and Canaan was his homeland (31.3). This borrowing, therefore, represents Van Seters' 'blind motive', a feature that characterizes the composition variant. Jacob's long stay in Haran enables the author of Gen. 31 to present Jacob's return as an event as important as Abraham's first immigration to Canaan. Second, phraseological connections occur in the departure descriptions and the taking along of family members and possessions. Gen. 31.18 integrates shorter formulae from other immigration stories (Gen. 12.5; 36.6; 46.6), and thus alludes to the immigration stories of Abraham, Esau, and even Jacob and his household's descent to Egypt, which it puts last. Finally, the target phrase ללכת/לבוא ארצה כנען (set out for the land of Canaan / arrive in the land of Canaan) brings together Abraham's and Jacob's migration stories (12.5; 31.18).

response becomes the initiating step in the familial-legal and economic separation between Jacob and Laban. This combination of divergences from the Abraham story of לך לך, together with the similarities to and differences from the Haran stories (chs. 29–30), highlights the initial reason why the author of Genesis 31 has thus revised the Abraham story: in this way he indicates that Jacob's return from Haran is as important a foundational story as Abraham's previous immigration from that place.

This intention to portray Jacob in Abraham's likeness in their trek to Canaan stands also behind another resemblance between the two forefathers. God's appearance to Laban in a night dream to warn him not to offend Jacob (31.24) resembles God's appearance to Abimelech king of Gerar, in which God warns him not to offend Abraham (20.3-7). Through this allusion, Genesis 31 portrays Laban altogether differently from the earlier portrait. He is referred to here—for the first time in the Haran stories—as Laban the Aramaean (לבן הארמי), appearing as a foreign king who plots against Jacob.

The unique role of Genesis 31 as a later revision of the Haran stories is further emphasized by the addition of a national element to the family story that governs chs. 29–30. This element denotes the story of Jacob's departure as a story of familial (legal)-economic, national, religious, linguistic, and geographic separation.

1. *The familial (legal)-economic separation* from Laban's household is expressed by the daughters/wives. In their clear answer to Jacob (31.14-16) the two wives proclaim their justification for such a break, saying העוד לנו חלק ונחלה בבית אבינו ('Have we still a share in the inheritance of our father's house?');[11] they explain their position as a reaction to Laban's attitude towards them, הלוא נכריות נחשבנו לו ('Surely, he regards us as outsiders'),[12] and they add two further legal arguments from the laws of marriage (v. 16). By this reasoning, the wealth Jacob has gained from their father indeed belongs legally to them and to their children. Thus, they declare their independence from their father Laban by virtue of their marriage to Jacob.

2. *The national separation*. The national character of the departure story is made explicit as of the second scene (vv. 19-25):

---

11.   The declaration העוד לנו חלק ונחלה בבית אבינו is not taken from the family laws, and does not refer to a protest against deprivation of the daughters/wives from Laban's inheritance (contra Rashi; and see 30.35). It seems that the wives' proclamation is borrowed in this chapter from political discourse (2 Sam. 20.1; 1 Kgs 12.16).

12.   Explaining the extremity of their action in the words, הלוא נכריות נחשבנו לו (v. 15), Laban's daughters compare their status in the eyes of their father to the deprived status of foreign women detached from their families in Israel and throughout the Ancient Near East, thus opening an ironic conflict that runs through the story (vv. 26, 28, 50). See also Ruth 2.10; and the comparative discussions of Gordon 1936: 156-57; 1937; Speiser and Pfeiffer 1935-1936: 95-96; Speiser 1964: 244-45, although this comparative direction has later been challenged by Greengus (1975: 5-31) and Eichler (1977: 45-59).

a) For the first time in the Haran stories, Laban is designated Laban the Aramaean, לבן הארמי (vv. 20, 24), and his family lineage is not given (as it was in 29.5, 10 [2×], 11, 12).

b) Laban's pursuit of Jacob (31.22-25) evokes Pharaoh's pursuit of the Israelites (Exod. 14.5-9), in both literary structure and phraseology.[13]

c) Laban's words, ותנהג את בנתי כשביות חרב ('and carrying off my daughters like captives of the sword', Gen. 31.26), borrows the language of war between nations. In fact, Gen. 31.26 is the only passage where this phrase is transferred from the international battlefield to the family domain.[14]

d) The treaty at Gilead (the fourth scene, 31.44–32.1) represents a two-phase treaty. The first phase focuses upon the status of the daughters, the second on the Laban–Jacob relationship. The former is portrayed as a one-sided treaty initiated by the women's father, Laban, who is interested in assuring their status within Jacob's household (vv. 48-50, following Laban's accusation in v. 26); the latter is a two-sided treaty initiated by Laban (vv. 51-53a). The difference between the two aspects of the agreement seems to reflect the two spheres of the departure story as a whole, as told in ch. 31, which is rooted in the family story of chs. 29–30, yet adds a national-etiological sphere to it.[15] This two-sided treaty, which shows clear connections to the ancient Near Eastern parity treaty, expresses the mutual commitment of two parties not to cross into one another's territory, with each evoking his god as witness to the treaty's validity (v. 53a). This designates the tendency to portray the end of the hostile relationship between Jacob and Laban with a declaration of peace based on clear geographical distinctions between them.[16]

13. Rabbinic sources continued this line and treated Laban as an earlier equivalent to Pharaoh. Daube (1963: 62-72) points out similarities between the Jacob-Laban stories and the Israel-Pharaoh relationship in the Exodus tradition.

14. Qimhi felt the tension between the family sphere of the Jacob–Laban relationship and the national sphere. The phrase כשביות חרב (as captives of the sword) is taken from the latter; see 2 Chron. 29.9; stories about the capture of Israelite women by non-Israelites (1 Sam. 30.2; 2 Kgs 5.2) and vice versa (Gen. 34.29; Num. 31.9); and the law regarding foreign female captives (Deut. 21.10-14). In all these passages the foreign woman is defenseless and has the lowest social status in her place of captivity.

15. This option seems more reasonable than the scholarly attempts to allot the two treaties to the supposed literary sources J and E (Westermann 1995: 497-98).

16. The prohibition of the transit of one party to the territory of the other is known from international political equity treaties, as in the treaty between Raamses II and Hattushili III (c. 1280 BCE), see *ANET*: 201-203; McCarthy 1978: 48. Von Rad (1972: 312) opines that the international covenant is much earlier than the family covenant.

3. *The religious separation.* Jacob's God is distinguished from Laban's gods. This distinction is developed throughout the chapter, as the *teraphim* are repeatedly designated as Laban's gods, התרפים אשר לאביה ('her father's household idols', vv. 19, 30, 32).[17] By contrast, Jacob refers to his God as אלהי אבי אלהי אברהם ופחד יצחק ('the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac', v. 42).[18] Following this, in the treaty oath the two distinct gods are called אלהי אברהם ואלהי נחור ('the God of Abraham and the god of Nahor', v. 53a), and each party swears by his own god, וישבע יעקב בפחד אביו יצחק ('And Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac', v. 53b). Genesis 31 expresses an exceptional position within the stories of the fathers: Jacob and Laban each has a distinct 'father's god' (so also vv. 5, 29; see below). After twenty years in Haran within his Aramaean family, Jacob is heading back to his father, thus returning to his religious and cultural Israelite identity.[19]

4. *The linguistic separation.* Laban speaks Aramaic, Jacob Hebrew. The mound Jacob establishes is given two names: Laban gives it an Aramaic name, יגר שהדותא and Jacob calls it by the Hebrew name גלעד (v. 47).[20] The Aramaic phrase, the only two Aramaic words in the entire Pentateuch, reflects the understanding of גלעד as a construct phrase: 'a mound of witness'. This is the only explicit testimony to a linguistic difference between the descendants of Nahor and those of Abraham (Ibn Ezra; Nachmanides).[21]

17.   Genesis 31, the only passage that identifies the *teraphim* as Laban's gods, suggests a threefold denigration: they are easily stolen; they are profaned by Rachel who sits upon them in her menstruation; and their believer has to helplessly search for them. Genesis 31 accuses Rachel harshly: the worship of the *teraphim* is Aramean in origin, brought by Rachel to Canaan against Jacob's will (and see Ibn Ezra). Compare to Gen. 35.1-7, where אלהי הנכר are referred to as part of Jacob's camp, with no specific connection to Rachel. In other places תרפים are but a mantic device, either Yahwistic (Judg. 17–18; 1 Sam. 15.23; Hos. 3.4), or one of the foreign (and thus denigrated) divination devices, Canaanite or Babylonian (2 Kgs 23.24; Ezek. 21.26; Zech. 10.2).

18.   The *hapax legomenon* פחד יצחק (vv. 42, 53a) may be understood as an Aramaism, reflecting דחלתא/דחלא as a divine epithet (by metonymy); see Hillers 1972 as against Malul 1985; Westermann 1995: 497.

19.   Gen. 31.53a refers to the gods of Abraham and Nahor and not to the gods of the biological parents of Jacob and Laban (Isaac and Bethuel), although here and also in v. 42 Isaac is also mentioned as in the *hapax* פחד יצחק (previous note). Cf. Josh. 24.2.

20.   The tension between vv. 47 and 48 led to the identification of v. 47 as a later gloss (Gunkel 1997: 339). While v. 47 is indeed alien to the form of the family treaty, it fits in with a separatist interpretation of Jacob's departure from Laban the Aramaean.

21.   See Skinner 1930: 401; Hamilton 1995: 314. Besides these two Aramaic words, there is a fairly large amount of Aramaisms in Gen. 31. Greenfield (1981) enumerates the following phrases: ויצל...ויתן לי ('God has taken away your father's livestock and given it to me', v. 9, Jacob speaking), ולא נטשתני לנשק ('You did not even let me kiss my sons and daughters good-by!' v. 28, Laban speaking), וידבק אתו ('catching up with him', v. 23, the

5. *The geographical separation*. The border established in Gilead (v. 48), or at Mitzpah (v. 49), designates the line northeast of which is the territory of Laban, and west of which is the area of Jacob.[22] This geographical note merits a comment on the historical location of the Aramaeans and the Israelites. The struggles between Israel and Aram over the control of the trans-Jordan area, reported as occurring from the tenth to the eighth centuries BCE (as for instance in 1 Kings 22), do not seem to be reflected in Genesis 31, since this story expropriates territory from both sides. Gilead appears here as territory that formerly belonged to neither party. Laban resides in the Haran area of North Mesopotamia, Jacob returns to the western side of the Jordan, the Gilead is the area into which none of them will ever again cross.[23]

These five dimensions of Jacob's departure from Laban the Aramaean illustrate Jacob's meaningful separation from the Aramaean world he was forced to reside in for more than twenty years, before he could return to his father's household. Even more emphatically, the story portrays this departure as a sheer new beginning—this is Jacob's emigration story, following his great forefather, Abraham. If we analyze this story from the perspective of national group identity, it becomes clear that Genesis 31 adds to the family story dimensions that create a national separation, as each of the two ethnic groups is seen to have distinctive culture, religion, language, group heritage, memories, and territory.[24]

3. *Genesis 31 as a Polemical Story*

a. *Biblical Polemic: Overt, Indirect and Hidden*
In both her English (2000) and Hebrew (2003) books on biblical polemics, Yairah Amit called attention to the ideological positions embedded overtly or—as is often the case—covertly within biblical literature, and to the literary

---

narrator's voice); he poses the question of whether they reflect the linguistic sensitivity of the early author, or the final revision of the text, conducted at a time when Aramaic was well known in Judah. I would add other phrases to this list: ברדים ('speckled', v. 12), פחד יצחק ('the Fear of Isaac', v. 42), וירימה מצבה ('and set it up as a pillar', v. 45), המצבה אשר יריתי ('the pillar which I have set up', v. 51). On אחטנה ('I myself made good the loss', v. 39) as a borrowing from Akkadian, see Finkelstein 1968: 30-36.

22.   The double toponyms have been considered as evidence for the intertwining of two literary sources (Skinner 1930: 399).

23.   The Gilead area was not part of the Aramaean residential territories; see Dion 1995: 1281-94; Pitard 1994: 207-30. This ethno-genealogical connection to the Aramaeans is only one of four different traditions of origin in the Bible (see Gen. 10.22; 22.21; Amos 9.7). This plethora of traditions attests to the obscurity of the 'true' origin and genealogy of the Aramaeans among biblical authors.

24.   In its perspective on ethnic identity, Gen. 31 illustrates all six elements delineated by Smith 1986: 6-46; Hutchinson and Smith 1996: 4-16.

devices used to convey those positions. Amit argues that biblical literature demonstrates a profound 'polemical tendency', illustrating diverse internal ideological struggles that occupied Israelites and Judaeans time and again over centuries, throughout the biblical era (Amit 2000: 3-6).

The great challenge Amit faces concerns the arguments used to define a biblical text as a polemical text, and all the more as a hidden polemic. According to Amit (7), a text may be designated polemical if it raises an ideological issue towards which several different stances may be located in the Bible (though not necessarily in similar contexts). This requirement is not free of difficulties, which Amit addresses one by one. First, polemical arguments in biblical literature must be distinguished from textual or literary variants that often occur alongside each other with no traces of conflict (7-11). Second, Amit searches for 'convincing arguments' to validate the ideological conflict. The text has to present 'an issue for polemic' (10), and demonstrate this issue's position within existing 'polemical tension' (14).

This leads to a third point, the relationship between polemical positions and historical realities. A polemical text addresses an issue that was being debated in ancient Israelite society and reflects 'the pluralistic and complex nature of reality' (12-15). Accordingly, the scholarly task is to supply 'proof' to validate the presence of antagonistic positions within biblical literature (15). This may be done by clarifying and sharpening the 'polemic situation(s)' through analysis of the historical reality depicted in the text.[25] A fourth element is the cross-biblical interest in polemics. Amit points out that instances of ideological struggle occur within various genres: in historiography, law, prophecy, wisdom, and psalmodic literature. This diversity demonstrates that no polemical issue is ever discussed systematically. Hence, the scholar needs to assemble the relevant texts in a kind of pastiche, which often does not produce a unified (or closed) statement (24-26).[26]

---

25.   Amit herself (2000: 16-22) makes the distinction between a literary-ideological picture and reality (or even 'depicted [fictional] reality', p. 16 n. 26). She uses the example of Pentateuchal slavery laws and their concrete contexts in Jer. 34 and Neh. 5 to show how one might reconstruct an ongoing polemic within Israelite society. The latter two writings provide the description of the concrete reality which, according to Amit, informed the Pentateuchal laws themselves. This is one of the points at which circular arguments may develop, thus great caution is required. See Amit's conclusion regarding the polemic over 'the place of the Sabbath in everyday life' (22-24): 'Thus, knowledge of a polemic, based upon reconstruction of the world following from other texts, may shed light upon a text as representing a stance' (24).

26.   Amit adds a fifth point, a methodological comment for scholars to bear in mind when studying polemical texts: 'in many cases the reader is unable to free himself from his own world-view or from the exegetical tradition in which he was trained and interprets the text accordingly' (2000: 26).

Amit praises the editorial processes that left antagonistic positions side by side within biblical literature (32-33), and suggests that the editors intention-ally left those conflicts intact, exemplifying the complexity and the multiface-tedness of reality. At the same time, she demonstrates the diverse ways through which editors give room to their own stances (as for instance in Chronicles), deliberately hint at a polemic (e.g. concerning David as the killer of Goliath), or seek to shape the reader's perspective on the a given polemical issue (as in the monotheistic proclamation of Deuteronomy 4; or via the closing motto of Judges, with its pro-monarchic position). She finds that these diverse editorial tactics reflect the editors' consciousness of and sensitivity to changing stands and to pluralism of thought (33-39).

Focusing on biblical stories, Amit distinguishes three kinds of polemic—open, indirect, and hidden—judging by their degree of explicitness in presenting the subject matter and their stance toward it (44). While she calls attention to the lack of systematic (modern) 'abstract terms' by which polem-ical issues may be identified within a specific story, she does maintain that a direct or open polemic presents its subject and its position explicitly (56). Hence, locating them may require a more attentive reading of the text (49). Open polemics present their polemical issue through both explicit and implicit literary devices (44-49), and readers are expected to realize them both.[27]

Indirect (or implicit) polemics do present an explicit subject (as for instance the polemic against human sacrifice that is explicitly mounted in Genesis 22), but the story masks its specific stance (the divine command is only a test, and the child sacrifice was prevented through the substitution of a ram, 66-70). Therefore, readers need to figure out the text's polemical posi-tion by looking at the implicit literary devices utilized, such as plot, sequence of occurrences, shaping of characters, analogies, viewpoint or perspective, and style (57). Amit finds in implicit polemic a tendency to draw the readers into greater involvement with the story, as they are expected to uncover the concealed position themselves.[28] In addition, at times, the implicit polemic stands for the author's uneasiness with the story's anticipated position. With regard to both explicit and implicit polemics, Amit points out 'an essential condition'; that is, advocating the particular polemical position through a reliable figure within the story, i.e., the narrator; a respected character; or even, and preferably, God (50-56).

27. An explicit polemic is for instance Elijah's trial by fire at Mt. Carmel (1 Kgs 18.16), where the issue is explicitly specified in v. 21, and in addition the author's position governs the whole story through both explicit and implicit devices (Amit 2000: 58-61).

28. In connection with the issue of child sacrifice Amit also discusses two other texts, 2 Kgs 3.27 and Judg. 11.31 (2000: 70-72).

Hidden polemic, according to Amit, involves a subject that is not explicitly mentioned; or to put it positively, the polemical issue has been purposely concealed, although hints within the text lead the reader to tease out the hidden subject. Amit notes special efforts to hide the polemic through 'techniques of avoidance and camouflage' (93-94). This tactic of concealment guarantees that the story stands on its own, even without revealing its polemical nature; but once this element is revealed, the story gains further depth.

Uncovering a hidden polemic is thus the most difficult challenge of all. Amit spells out four characteristics that identify a hidden polemic. First (and a given), the polemical subject is concealed. Second, and a controlling criterion, other overtly or indirectly polemical texts on the same topic should be located to assure that the subject is indeed one of conflict within the biblical literature (94, 96-97), and 'a concrete problem of the authors' world' (95). Third, the author will have left specific 'landmarks' to lead the reader to the polemical subject. Thus readers need to discover the 'accumulative evidence…a series of signs that converge at one point: the hidden subject of the polemic' (96). Fourth (and another controlling criterion)—it should be possible to locate the subject of the hidden polemic within postbiblical exegetical tradition, in order 'to assure that the polemic is not only the idea of a commentator with an imagination or relevant needs' (97).

These guidelines for detecting biblical polemical texts substantiate my reading of Genesis 31 in two ways. First, as a 'composition variant', Genesis 31 illustrates an explicit polemic that responds to several issues raised by the Haran stories (chs. 29–30). Genesis 31 wrestles with the earlier portrayal of Jacob in reference to his working relationship with Laban, his wealth, and the issue of his legal status in parting from Laban, who is still recognized as the head of the household. It wrestles, further, with the length of Jacob's sojourn in Haran, portraying his journey back home as a divinely commanded emigration (following the model of Abraham); furthermore, it wrestles with the not-pious-enough portrayal of the relationship between Jacob and his God, adding 'corrective' markers.

I would like to suggest that in its insistence on Jacob's non-Aramaean *origin* in spite of the family connection*,* in its presentation of the legal, religious, linguistic, national, and geographical distinctions between Jacob and Laban at their parting, Genesis 31 reveals a hidden polemic and establishes its own position within the polemics concerning Jacob's identity. To validate this point, I shall address other texts that demonstrate both 'the issue for polemic' and 'polemical tension(s)'. As is typical for hidden biblical polemics, these texts are scattered and function independently, each in its own context; but, as will be suggested further on, each expresses a clear (though covert) stance on Jacob's identity. The texts are mostly within the Abraham and Jacob cycles that refer to the family connections maintained with descendants of Terah in Haran; added to these is Deut. 26.5, which

explicitly refers to Jacob as Aramaean.[29] I will analyze these texts in order to tease out their ethnic/group identity perspectives, using the following criteria of identity definition: kinship (i.e. common ancestry, lineage, familial relationships), cultural heritage (including religion and language), territory, and solidarity.[30]

b. *Family Lineage in the Fathers' Stories: The House of Abraham and the House of Nahor*

The stories of the fathers in Genesis emphasize that the fathers kept in contact with their family in Haran. Thus Abraham in his later years sends his servant to Haran to find a wife for Isaac (Genesis 24). These family connections again play a major role in Jacob's life, when his parents send him to Rebecca's family, to Laban (Gen. 27.46–28.9). There he finds his wives, there his children are born, and from there he sets out to return to Canaan (chs. 28–35).[31]

1. *Genesis 24*. The story of the winning of Rebecca in Genesis 24 is the first text we will consider. The story, the longest novella of Genesis, opens with Abraham's command to his servant (vv. 1-9), and concludes with the servant's recognition that Isaac is his lord (vv. 65-66). This story relates the transition from Abraham–Sarah to Isaac–Rebecca. Moreover, Rebecca's departure from Haran resembles Abraham's emigration to Canaan: in Abraham's command כי אל ארצי ואל מולדתי תלך ולקחת אשה לבני ליצחק ('but you will go to the land of my birth and get a wife for my son Isaac', v. 4; cf. 12.1); in the servant's words to Laban, where he repeats his master's command, and adds 'the household' to this construction, to make the choice even more inclusive: אל בית אבי תלך ואל משפחתי ולקחת אשה לבני ('but you shall go to my father's house, to my kindred, and get a wife for my son', v. 38; so also v. 40); in Rebecca's immediate readiness to leave—ותאמר אלך ('And she said, "I will go"', v. 58); and in the servant's diligence at executing his master's command without delay (v. 61), thus fully completing his

---

29.   These texts are presumably of different literary sources and dates. The following discussion places them only in a relative chronology.

30.   The following discussion utilizes some of the six characteristics of ethnic identity suggested by Smith 1986: 6-46; Hutchinson and Smith 1996: 4-16. The first two characteristics mentioned by Smith (name and shared memories) do not seem to be of relevance to the biblical family stories.

31.   The present view on the group identity of the forefathers rests on the understanding of each literary composition in Genesis as an independent tradition that could have been developed over a long period of time and by different authors. The rich literary materials in Genesis do not seem to add up to continuous literary sources, but comprise a rich and diverse anthology. In this judgment I therefore follow Cassuto 1961: 6; Rofé 1990: 27-39; and Westermann 1995: 33, among others.

assignment.[32] While Isaac is forbidden to return to Aram (vv. 5-9), ch. 24 is well-contextualized within the general picture that describes Abraham as the first to emigrate from Haran to Canaan; through Rebecca, his wife and the mother of his children, Isaac's place within this family pattern is maintained.[33] Although born in Canaan, Isaac's ongoing family and marriage connections guarantee that the foreign/non-Canaanite character of the fathers' family is continuously acknowledged.

Amit (2000: 78) views Genesis 24 as an explicit polemic regarding marriage to Canaanite women, a suggestion further substantiated by Isaac and Rebecca's displeasure with Esau's Hittite wives (26.34; 27.46; 28.1-9). On the basis of this observation, I will highlight some of the major features that construct this chapter's perspectives on Isaac's marriage within the family.

First, the story's primary interest is the divine providence that accompanies the servant throughout his journey and leads him to the successful completion of his mission (vv. 1-9 and 61-67).[34] This accompanying providence is acknowledged in the second scene (vv. 10-27), when the servant's prayer (vv. 12-14) is immediately answered by way of his meeting with Rebecca (vv. 15-25, and 45), for which the servant is grateful (vv. 26-27). It is further stressed in the servant's words to Laban and his household concerning his master's command (vv. 35, 37-41, cf. vv. 1-9); in his retelling of the meeting with Rebecca (vv. 42-48); and finally in Laban and Bethuel's reactions, in which they recognize that human actions are all directed by God (vv. 50-51).[35]

Second, emphasis is laid on Rebecca's lineage. Her descent from Nahor, Abraham's brother, and Milcah, Nahor's wife, is spelled out three times in the course of the narrative (רבקה...אשר ילדה לבתואל בן מלכה אשת נחור אחי אברהם, 'Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel, the son of Milcah the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor', vv. 15, 24, 47).[36] In addition, the servant

---

32: לקח ('take') and הלך ('go') serve as leading words in this story, see Hamilton 1995: 159.

33. Sternberg (1987: 138-39) pointed out the similarity between Rebecca's deeds (24.14, 18-20) to Abraham's hospitality in 18.2-7, and found that the goal of this allusion was to illustrate Rebecca as the proper wife for Abraham's son. Sternberg did not discuss the above-mentioned similarities between the characters of Rebecca and Abraham in regard to the emigration to Canaan.

34. Scholars have highlighted the idea of divine providence from diverse literary viewpoints, see Skinner 1930: 340; von Rad 1972: 259-60; Van Seters 1975: 241-48; Westermann 1995: 382-83; and finally, Sternberg 1987: 131-52.

35. Sternberg (1987: 138) accentuated the dramatic role of the repetitions in Genesis 24 and called it 'the fireworks of repetition'; see Savran 1988: 46-48.

36. Also note the strategically placed foreshadowing of this family relationship at Gen. 22.20-23, immediately following the *Akedah*, when Abraham is told of his brother Nahor's growing family.

emphasizes the close family connection when he mentions that he has arrived at the house of his master's brothers (בית אחי אדני, 'to the house of my master's kinsmen', v. 27),[37] and when he repeats Abraham's directive to find a wife for Isaac within בית אבי and משפחתי (vv. 38-40). All these family details underscore Rebecca's ties to Isaac on both sides of the family; not only is Nahor Abraham's brother, but Milcah is the sister of Lot and the daughter of Haran (11.29). Isaac's marriage thus proceeds according to the Nahor–Milcah pattern: the father or his son marries the brother's daughter (or granddaughter; this pattern recurs again in Jacob's marriage to the daughters of Laban).

Third, Laban's character is of great interest in this chapter. It is Laban who runs to welcome the servant, as soon as he sees Rebecca approaching the house with new jewelry and upon hearing her report (24.29). Does Laban welcome foreign guests just as do his uncles (Abraham and Lot) and his sister, Rebecca (v. 20)? Or is he perhaps merely hoping for monetary gain from this stranger? As Christopher Heard has shown, the narrative leaves these questions unanswered, calling the reader to perceive Laban's motives in one of these two antagonistic ways.[38] But could we do that in ch. 24, and free our minds from Laban's characterization in other episodes within the Jacob stories? It is important to note that unlike the characterization of Laban in chs. 29–30 and 31, ch. 24 does not identify Laban as Aramaean, and does not connect him with cheating and deception.

Fourth, the Nahorite family in Haran appears in this story to accept Yahweh, the God who had earlier revealed himself to Abraham and commanded him to leave his country with his family and his household (12.1-3). In addition to Laban's welcoming formula, בוא ברוך יהוה ('Come in, O blessed of the LORD', v. 31),[39] Laban and Bethuel agree to give Rebecca to

---

37. The plural form אחי (v. 27) is difficult. The Versions read the term as singular here, as in v. 48, see Westermann 1995: 381.

38. Heard 2001: 139-45. Among the interpreters who judge Laban critically in this story and connect his first appearance here to the development of his character in the Jacob–Laban stories, see Rashi and Qimhi; and among the moderns, Skinner 1930: 344; Speiser 1964: 184. By contrast, Westermann (1995: 388) and Hamilton (1995: 152) find his haste to welcome the servant as hospitable as Rebecca's. It should be emphasized that 'running' (v. 29) also appears in reference to the servant (v. 17) and Rebecca (vv. 20, 28), as also in vv. 18, 20, 46; and note the use of the same term in the quintessential hospitality narrative of Abraham welcoming the three angels (Genesis 18.).

39. Hamilton (1995: 152-53) neglects the proclamation of Laban's connection with Yahweh in this formula. As for vv. 50-51, Hamilton aptly notes the theological argument and the lack of any mention of the family connections by Laban or Bethuel as support for their consent to give Rebecca to Abraham's son. Sternberg finds this reaction to express that 'the Mesopotamians have passed a process in which they had discovered Yahweh as the "Lord of the universe"' (1987: 151-52).

Isaac, *because* (it seems) they are able to acknowledge that Yahweh is the actor behind the scenes:

<div dir="rtl">

מיהוה יצא הדבר לא נוכל דבר אליך רע או טוב
הנה רבקה לפניך קח ולך ותהי אשה לבן אדניך כאשר דבר יהוה

</div>

'The matter was decreed by the LORD; we cannot speak to you bad or good. Here is Rebekah before you; take her and go, and let her be a wife to your master's son, as the LORD has spoken' (vv. 50-51).

Or, should we consider the possibility that Laban and Bethuel's words are but a fawning formula for opening the negotiations concerning the marriage agreement?

Genesis 24 is narrowly focused on the family story and family ties between the Abrahamic and Nahorite branches of Terah's descendants, so much so that the narrative contains no indication of any linguistic or cultural-religious difference between the two families. This position stands in clear contrast to Josh. 24.2, and to the midrashic traditions depicting Abraham as the destroyer of his father's idols, the idols of Ur (e.g. *Jubilees* 12). Genesis 24 does not understand Abraham's emigration story as one of cultural-religious separation from his family's polytheism.[40]

Hence, while Genesis 24 should indeed be considered a late story and part of the explicit polemic against marriage to Canaanite women, its silence on Laban's Aramaic identity points to another polemical content as well. In its positive presentation of family relationships, this novella presents an altogether different stance toward Laban than does the negative presentation of Laban the Aramaean in Genesis 31. Neither does it accord with the identification of Laban as Aramaean in Priestly sources (to be discussed below). Thus, I would accentuate the chapter's independent status on the issue of Jacob's identity and family lineage.[41]

2. *Genesis 29–30*. When analyzed according to their conceptions of kinship, chs. 29–30 of the Jacob-Laban cycle portray tight family bonds between Jacob and Laban, his mother's brother. Beginning with Jacob's initial question to the herdsmen, הידעתם את לבן בן נחור ('Do you know Laban the son of Nahor?' 29.5), where the family lineage jumps over Bethuel and reaches back to Nahor,[42] Genesis 29–30 treats Laban as the head of the

---

40. Applying Laban's characterization in ch. 31 to ch. 24 and the Haran stories, commentators argue that, as an Aramaean, Laban is a polytheist by definition (Hamilton 1995: 140).

41. Rofé 1990: 27-39. Suggestions to date the chapter late within the cycle of fore-fathers' stories have been made from very early in studies of Genesis. Commentators have usually considered Gen. 24 a late stratum in J (Westermann 1995: 383); and see below.

42. Inaccurate familial information is also present in Jacob's words to Rachel (29.12), and there is no reason to suppose an interchangeable tradition. Compare to Westermann 1995: 463 and note the harmonistic efforts of Nachmanides and Qimhi on Gen. 29.5.

household. Thus, Jacob is Laban's nephew (29.10), and Laban indeed recognizes the close relationship when he says: אך עצמי ובשרי אתה ('You are truly my bone and flesh', v. 14). In marrying Laban's daughters Jacob *enters* Laban's household, from which he eventually initiates departure in order to set up his own independent household (30.25). Throughout these two chapters Laban is never tagged as Aramaean.

As for cultural–religious identity, the birth stories focus on Jacob's sons and the names given and explained by their mothers. These stories show no difference between Jacob and his wives in reference to their recognition of Yahweh. He is invoked by Laban's daughters in the naming of Reuben, Simeon, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun and Joseph.[43] Moreover, Laban himself recognizes God's involvement in his life when he acknowledges that his wealth stems from Yahweh's blessing upon him, given for the sake of Jacob, ויברכני יהוה בגללך ('the LORD has blessed me on your account', 30.27, and see Jacob's response, v. 30).[44]

Within this framework of the closed familial bond of Jacob's marriage relationship, these chapters construct the animosity between Laban and Jacob. These are the stories that continue the stamp of cheating that clung to Jacob from his encounters with Esau. For the first time, though (and one might say, in retribution), deceit is not committed only by Jacob. But while, in accordance with the midrash, Jacob and Laban may be seen as 'brothers in cheating', it is important to realize that the stories distinguish clearly between them. On the overt level the narrative avoids denigrating Jacob. He is not labeled as a cheater; in fact, throughout the Jacob cycle only once is the root רמה Pi. ('cheat') applied to his actions (by Isaac; 27.35).[45] A direct accusation of cheating appears once in the Jacob stories, and not-surprisingly it is leveled by Jacob against Laban: ולמה רמיתני ('Why did you deceive me?', 29.25). But the covert level of the Jacob stories (revealed by the general structure of the cycle and the episodes that it contains) does not clear Jacob of this accusation (see for instance Esau's accusation, 27.36). Jacob of chs. 29–30 is not only a victim of deceit, but also one who through his wisdom (and tricks) succeeds in overturning long term exploitation. Thus, as Buber and Cassuto show, Jacob was punished and suffered for his

43. Gen. 29.32, 33, 35; 30:5, 6, 17, 20, 23-24.Westermann (1995: 472) regards the name explanations where God is invoked as a late elaboration in the birth stories.

44. In contradistinction to Hamilton (1995: 278, 282) who argues that Laban is a non-Yahwistic foreigner, one may notice that Laban's words do not pose a distinction between Jacob's God and his. It seems that here (as in his reading of Genesis 24), Hamilton is swayed by his perspective on the portrait of Laban in Genesis 31, and he unjustifiably harmonizes the stories as regards their attitudes towards Laban.

45. The prophets add this exegetical layer to Jacob's character when they appropriate this term to admonish the people for their sins (Jer. 9.3; Hos. 12).

trickery throughout his life, and the Haran stories occupy a central role in that thematic complex.[46] Yet, this animosity between Jacob and Laban in chs. 29–30 has nothing to do with Laban's ethnic identity, which is completely framed within the familial relationship of the uncle turned father-in-law, who exploits his son-in-law's powers to enrich himself.

3. *Laban the Aramaean*. In addition to Gen. 31.20, 24, only two Priestly passages in the Jacob stories call Laban 'the Aramaean' (Gen. 25.19-20; 27.46–28.9). The two have a bridging role in the stories, and thus appear to be editorial.

In Gen. 25.19-20 we read:

> This is the story of Isaac, son of Abraham. Abraham begot Isaac. Isaac was forty years old when he took to wife Rebekah, daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, sister of Laban the Aramean (בקחתו את רבקה
> בת בתואל הארמי מפדן ארם אחות לבן הארמי לו לאשה).

As in its other occurrences in Genesis, this *toledot*-formula mentions the father (Isaac) in order to introduce the stories of his descendants, Jacob and Esau (25.19–35.29; 36). The *toledot*-formula focuses on procreation and marriage; accordingly it first mentions Isaac's lineage and then jumps immediately to his marriage with Rebecca, so as to introduce the birth of their twin sons (25.21-26). The atypical designation of Bethuel and Laban as 'the Aramaean', and the reference to their territory as Paddan-Aram, are emphasized by the proximity of this formulation to Genesis 24. The formula in 25.19-20 is interested in Rebecca's lineage too, but the designations differ. In this *toledot*-formula two comments are brought together: the first referring to Rebecca's father, the second to her brother. Unlike Genesis 24, where the lineage reference goes back two generations to Milcah and Nahor (24.15, 24, 47), in 25.19-20 it goes only as far as Rebecca's father and brother, and each is separately tagged as Aramaean.

Genesis 27.46–28.9 is the second bridging passage, coming between the close of the story about the theft of Isaac's blessing and the opening of the story of Jacob's escape to Haran. It contains two subunits, vv. 41-45 and 27.46–28.9. As Claus Westermann has shown, vv. 41-45 are connected to the previous story through v. 41, which refers again to Esau's hatred toward Jacob (mentioned already in v. 36); to this the passage adds Rebecca's new plan, which introduces the following unit—Jacob's escape and return (chs. 28, and even more so, chs. 29–33). After the failure of her first plan,

---

46. Buber (1964: 291-92) points this out in his discussion of the 'leading word' in Biblical literature; and Cassuto (1961: 719) counts ten *talio* judgments in the Jacob stories. Fishbane (1975: 30-31) presents the hidden criticism against Jacob in the cycle's literary structure; and see Cohn 1983: 11.

Rebecca's new plot aims at securing Jacob's life, now under threat from Esau (vv. 43-45). In Rebecca's effort to convince Jacob to leave she minimizes the length of the proposed separation; promises that she will send for him to return as soon as possible; and does not mention marriage. Like in the other family stories, the family bonds are tightly maintained, thus Laban is designated as 'my brother' residing in Haran (v. 43).[47]

Genesis 27.46–28.9 presents yet a different connection to a previous passage, as well as an opening to the one that follows. This time the connection is made to the concluding comment (Gen. 26.34-35), which precedes the story of the theft of the blessing (ch. 27).[48] Rebecca's complaint, אם לקח יעקב אשה מבנות חת כאלה ('If Jacob marries a Hittite woman like these, from among the native women', 27.46), corresponds with the report of Esau's marrying Hittite women (26.34-35). The following verses (28.1-9) elaborate further on those women, using the general designation בנות כנען ('daughters of Canaan', 28.1, 6, 8).[49]

Genesis 28.1-5 is easily marked as Priestly. The passage opens with Jacob's prohibition to his son (לא תקח אשה מבנות כנען 'You shall not take a wife from among the Canaanite women', v. 1), and continues with a positive command, קום לך פדנה ארם ביתה בתואל אבי אמך וקח לך משם אשה מבנות לבן אחי אמך ('Up, go to Paddan-aram, to the house of Bethuel, your mother's father, and take a wife there from among the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother', v. 2), and closes with a blessing (vv. 3-4) that promises reward for obedience. This blessing is very different from Isaac's blessings to Jacob and Esau in ch. 27 (Westermann 1995: 447-48). Genesis 28.3-4 portrays no physical contact between father and son, nor any sign of a ceremonial act; in fact, the blessing is closer to the promises in the forefathers' stories including procreation, political greatness, and the land (as in Gen. 17.1-8).[50] In its emphasis on marriage within the family, Gen. 27.46–28.9 contributes another example to the explicit polemic against marriage with Canaanite women (and see the discussion on Genesis 24 above). This literary opposition between the Canaanite women and the daughters of Laban highlights the differences between the two brothers, Jacob and Esau. Genesis 28.2 accentuates the closeness of the family bond: Bethuel is the father

47. Westermann (1995: 443) found these verses to be J's bridging verses, like Gen. 25.27-28. For distinctions between Gen. 27.46–28.9 and the previous narrative in Gen. 27, see Speiser 1964: 215-16.

48. Gen. 26.34-35 is Priestly as well (Speiser 1964: 202; Hamilton 1995: 210).

49. Interchanges between החתי and הכנעני are not uncommon in Genesis and in the lists of the nations (Ishida 1979: 464-65, 470-74).

50. According to Westermann (1995: 446-48), this ideological content is of major importance to the Priestly source that wished to add what are considered to be more significant blessings to the earlier ones, and likewise to connect Jacob with Abraham.

of Jacob's mother, and the potential wives will be the daughters of Laban, his mother's brother. Genesis 28.5 describes Jacob's full execution of his father's command, and repeats Laban's lineage in a combined description as both the son of Bethuel and the brother of Rebecca (similar to 25.20). Rebecca, in her turn, is recognized as the mother of Jacob and Esau. In addition to his characterization by family lineage, Laban is also tagged as 'the Aramaean'.

The traditions concerning Esau and Jacob's marriages (26.34-35; 27.46–28.9) close the first round of the struggle between Jacob and Esau (chs. 25–28).[51] The author uses these traditions to suggest Esau's perspective on Jacob's obedience to his father's instructions (28.6-9). Within the *Wiederaufnahme*, וירא עשו כי ('When Esau saw that', vv. 6, 8), Esau's wish to appease his father is brought forth. But it seems that Esau's corrective actions only bring additional mockery upon him, since in an effort to rectify his earlier mistake he now takes Mahalat, Ishmael's daughter, as his wife. Mahalat is indeed a family relative, but in marrying her Esau perpetuates his 'outsider' status in the family as he ties himself to one of the rejected descendants of Abraham-Isaac. This episode thus designates Jacob as the chosen son who is in consequence ordered to leave for Paddan Aram.[52] The passage (28.6-9) ends with Esau's clear recognition of Jacob's advantage over him—Jacob has gained the birthright, his father's blessing, and both his parents' pleasure in his proposed marriage. With this passage, the Priestly author/editor suggests that the family in Paddan Aram is the only legitimate marriage option.

This last comment is of great importance for understanding the Priestly attitude to Bethuel and Laban's designation as 'the Aramaean'. In both Priestly passages this tagging is set in the same context with the mention of the close family bonds to the family in Aram, preferable probably because of its physical distance from the Canaanite women/peoples of the land. In this context, the tagging as 'Aramaean' does not offend or denigrate Bethuel and Laban ethnically; and the text clearly does not find fault with Jacob's marriage connections.[53] The reinforcement of close family connections alongside of the Aramaean tagging suggests that for the Priestly writer, 'Aramaean' is but a geographical and spatial term, which indicates a region as far as possible from Canaan.

51.   Fokkelman (1975: 115-21) pointed out the overt and the covert literary progression of chs. 25–28.

52.   Fokkelman (1975: 105-106) noted the way these verses denigrate Esau. Although Westermann (1995: 448) found this text sympathetic to Esau, I find it very disparaging.

53.   Compare Rashi (on Gen. 25.20): 'Bethuel of Paddan Aram's daughter, Laban's sister. Was not it already written that she was Bethuel's daughter and Laban of Paddan Aram's sister? But to give her praise: although she was the daughter of a villain and the sister of one, and her place was that of evil men, she did not learn from their deeds'.

4. *'A Wandering Aramaean was my Father': Deuteronomy 26.5.* Deuteronomy 26.1-11 features one of two liturgical declarations delivered annually by every Israelite before God, as part of the first-fruits ceremony (v. 5; and see v. 13). The theological importance of this proclamation has been widely recognized since Gerhard von Rad's designation of this passage as the Israelite *credo* (1966: 3-13, originally 1938).[54] It may be so designated, insofar as this declaration constructs the religious identity of each member of the Israelite people as a follower of Yahweh by narrating in capsule form, in the first person,[55] the story of the divine salvation of Israel: from the bondage in Egypt; through the journey through the desert; and through the gift of the land, of which the first-fruits are now brought as a thanksgiving gift to God (v. 10).[56] In addition, this *credo* also serves to construct the national-religious identity of Israel by anchoring the story of the Exodus within the history of the forefathers.[57] Opening with the statement, 'A wandering Aramaean was my father', this retrospective tells of Jacob, who goes down to Egypt and becomes there a great nation, which is then enslaved by the Egyptians, saved and freed by God, and brought to the land.[58] This limited historical retrospection accentuates the national narrative of the common ancestor(s) who came from the outside to the land that God had given them.[59] However אבד is

54. On the Christian origin of *credo* as a genre see Speight 1987: 138-40.

55. In the singular, at vv. 5 and 10; and in the plural, at v. 6.

56. The declaration itself mounts an explicit polemic against syncretistic perceptions connecting agriculture and fertility to worship of the Canaanite gods Baal and Astarte. This passage introduces the monotheistic conception that God, the Lord of History and Savior, is also the One responsible for those ecological spheres of life (Rofé 1988: 49-55, esp. p. 53). On instruction in monotheism through liturgical speeches, see Weinfeld 1972: 32-42; Tigay 1996: 237-42. Martin Buber (1964: 82-88) called attention to the movement from the individual to the community in this text, and between the historical event of giving the land and its annual liturgical repetition.

57. Deut. 26.3 prefaces the longer speech of vv. 5-9 with a thankful proclamation, emphasizing the bond by which every person is connected to the Israelite narrative. On the importance of both proclamations, see Tigay 1996: 238.

58. Ibn Ezra, Hizquni and Sforno identified 'my father' with Jacob, whereas Rashbam and Bechor Shor argued it was Abraham, and that ארמי אבד refers to his wandering or to his status as an emigrant. But Abraham, while he did descend to Egypt, did not become there a great nation. Traditional and critical exegetes diverge on the question of whether Abraham and Isaac are included in the proclamation. It is also possible that the singular form refers to the entire family, as in Num. 20.15 (Steiner 1997). Nelson (2002: 309) argues that phrases that usually function in the Abraham stories (ירד and גור Qal, Gen. 12.10; 18.18) were connected to Jacob, and thus configure Jacob as the collective representative of all the forefathers.

59. Important chapters in the people's history are not included in this short summary. Von Rad (1966: 5-8; 1966a: 159) has already called attention to the lack of any hint concerning the Sinai traditions, as is also the case in Josh. 24; Num. 20.15-16; Deut. 6.20-25.

to be interpreted, the opening phrase emphasizes the opposition between the nameless, homeless, landless father and the permanent residence of the Israelites in the land.[60]

The phrase אבי אבד ארמי has challenged interpreters throughout the ages. Its main difficulty seems to be the tension between its syntactical construction and its contents. Syntactically, it is a nominal clause that suggests the identical construction where 'my father' is the subject and 'wandering Aramaean' is the predicate. Hence, 'my father', Jacob, is identified as an Aramaean. The reception history of the phrase shows two lines of interpretation, the one geographical the other ethnic. On the geographical side, the Septuagint reads: Συρίαν ἀπέβαλεν ὁ πατήρ μου, 'my father has abandoned Syria/Aram',[61] while the Peshitta suggests the opposite direction: *'by 'tdbr l'rm*, 'my father was taken to Aram'. Both versions suggest the same interpretive procedure, whereby the ethnic adjective ארמי was understood to refer to the name of the place, to which Jacob had been taken or from which he had departed (so also Ibn Ezra and Hizkuni; and Tigay, among present-day critical scholars).

The option of understanding the phrase at stake as a nominal identity clause that identifies Jacob ethnically as an Aramaean puzzled the Aramaic Targums and postbiblical interpreters (the Midrash, followed by medieval exegetes). Therefore, they syntactically distinguished ארמי from אבי. The nominal clause was transformed into a verbal one where the attribute ארמי takes the place of the *subject*, that is, Laban; and where אבי-Jacob is the

---

object affected by Laban's deeds against him.[62] According to this analysis, Jacob is not Aramaean at all!

Critical interpreters added another option to this ethnic line of thought. ארמי is indeed an ethnic marker, but within this syntactical context allows for the possibility that this is a term meant to denigrate Jacob (so S.R. Driver).[63] Dweit Daniels and Jeffery H. Tigay, however, did not find any evaluative nuance, negative or positive, in the use of ארמי. Therefore, they each interpreted this statement as crucial evidence for the historical background of the passage, assigning the entire passage to an early pre-Deuteronomistic provenance.[64]

This exegetical polemics (extending from early postbiblical times to the present) on ארמי אבד אבי, that is, on Jacob's Aramaean identity, seems to be well-contextualized within biblical literature itself. The liturgical declaration of Deut. 26.5 suggests two options for understanding the focus of this polemic: spatial (Aram as the place where Jacob came from) or ethnic (Jacob as the son of Rebecca, the sister of Laban, and the daughter of Bethuel, both Aramaean). The significance of these two possibilities may be further clarified through a look at the potential circumstances to which the polemic is responding.

4. *Summary: Polemics and Reality(/ies), a Relative Chronology*

The Abraham story (Genesis 24) and the Jacob stories (chs. 29–30; and 27.46–28.9) reveal a unanimous position on the matter of family bonds and proper marriage partners for the sons, Isaac and Jacob. From the early layers (chs. 29–30) to the later traditions (27.46–28.9; 24), these stories accentuate the familial–ethnic bond of the father(s) with the Nahorite family in Haran, representing the descendants of Terah as the only legitimate family to marry (see 24.3, 37; 27.36; 28.1; 29.10-30). But family bonds go beyond marriage to the common cultural–religious bond that unites the two branches of this family. The family stories of Genesis 29–30, as well as Genesis 24, depict no

62. See Targum Onqelos, and the double translation presented by Pseudo-Jonathan; the Passover Haggadah; and following those Saʿadiah, Rashi and Rashbam among others.

63. See Driver 1901: 289. Craigie (1976: 321) explained the term as likely referring to Jacob's marriage to Rachel and Leah, two Aramaean women; and he does not add a further word on such a problematic tagging.

64. Daniels (1990) searches for a time when the relationship with Aram was not hostile, thus suggesting the period of the Judges, or even of the forefathers themselves; whereas Tigay (1996: 240) points to a time earlier then the ninth century BCE, prior to the rise of political tensions between Israel/Judah and the Aramaean states (Nelson 2002: 308). But is it correct to relate this tagging to the political relationship between Israel/Judah and Aram?

differences in the recognition of Yahweh as God, nor any sign of linguistic distinctions.

The Priestly editorial passages (25.19-20; 27.46–28.9) retain the element of close family connections, and add the attribute 'Aramaean' to both Bethuel and Laban, without any delegitimization of the marriage relationship. Therefore, the attribute 'Aramaean' seems here to serve an exclusivizing function, by which the Priestly author/editor accentuates the forefathers' non-Canaanite origin. Through their marriages (and thus their descendants) both Isaac and Jacob continue the genealogy of the Haran/Aramaean, indisputably non-Canaanite, 'outsider' lineage. The common denominator of this consensus among the literary traditions seems, then, to be territorial—the region whence the forefathers had come, the region known as 'Aram'.

This line of thought seems to be taken a step further by Deut. 26.5, when the latter is compared with these Priestly comments. While ארמי אבד אבי clearly follows the exclusivizing tendency of the other passages, it identifies *Jacob* as Aramaean. This is the 'innovation' of Deut. 26.5; the Priestly sources, which have no problem tagging Bethuel and Laban with this label, never so designate Rebecca or Jacob. Deuteronomy 26.5 borrows the 'Aramaean' tagging as it appears in those Priestly passages, without any denigrating meaning. Jacob's 'Aramaean' identity tag emphasizes the outsider, non-Canaanite status of Israel. This historical exposition reflects on the common ancestor who came first from the territory of Aram and then went down to Egypt, before his descendants were brought to the land of Canaan.

The thesis that 'Aramaean' designates a territory, remote from the land of the Canaanites, rather than an ethnic–cultural distinction between Jacob and Laban, brings me to Peter Machinist's discussions of Israelite identity. Machinist holds that a central aspect of this identity is that the Israelites are outsiders to the land and to its ethnic inhabitants (Machinist 1991: 196-212; 1994: 35-60). Machinist pointed out the numerous occurrences of this concept within diverse genres and literary compositions spread over different times and places across the biblical corpus. This allochthonous conception of Israel is understood to emerge out of the ideological necessity to distinguish Israel from the autochthonous peoples of the land of Canaan. Israel has come from the outside, from the desert, where it was formed as a unique social–cultural unit, as a nation, distinct in its religious–cultural–cultic characteristics from the peoples of the land.

While Machinist differentiated between two groups of Gentile peoples—the autochthonous peoples of Canaan and those considered non-Canaanitic (Philistines, Aramaeans, Egyptians, etc.)—there are in fact three central circles of peoples surrounding Israel that dominate the stories in Genesis (and are reflected in Deuteronomy 2 as well). The first group is that of the peoples who are descendants of Terah; they might be called 'the cognate peoples'. Yet these are also the peoples who were excluded from the

principal lineage, and also from the land. They either reside in the desert (Ishmael), or in trans-Jordan (Ammon and Moab, the descendants of Lot, Edom-Esau).[65] The Canaanite peoples, on the other hand, are those who reside on the western side of the Jordan, in the territories of Israel. They are 'the proximate others' of the Israelite social and cultural context during the first centuries of the first millennium. Israel is commanded not to be in any contact with them (Exod. 34.16; Deut. 7.3-4), since Israel is supposed to maintain its ethnic (religious-cultural) uniqueness and its 'foreign' nature even in its land. The Aramaean connection designates a third circle of related peoples, and geographically the most distant one, the one on which the allochthonous conception of Israel is in fact constructed.[66] The marriage connections with the Nahorite family in Haran guarantee the ongoing relevance of this concept.[67] The patriarchal traditions, *especially* under their Priestly redaction, all report how each of the first three generations of the ancestors had maintained their identity as 'outsiders' by marrying women of that distant, foreign family from Haran/Aram.[68]

In light of the foregoing, it is possible to recognize that the explicit polemic in these passages operates not only as against marriage with Canaanite women (which unfortunately is usually connected to Ezra–Nehemiah's argument against intermarriage among the repatriates of the Persian period), but as part of a larger polemic against any contact with Canaanites. This polemic is part of the struggle over Israelite national-religious-cultic identity, which may be dated to the eighth or seventh centuries BCE. This thread of controversy runs through the Pentateuch and the Deuteronomistic historiography, and among other restrictions excludes marriage with Canaanite women (as in Exod. 34.11-16; Deut. 7.1-6).

65.　Machinist (1994: 49-51) discusses this 'outsiders' concept of origin among other peoples within the Ancient Near East (and the Greco-Roman world). He finds that it comes into play among relatively new groups, all of which emerged in the transitional period from the end of the Late Bronze through the Early Iron ages. While the archaeological evidence points to a continuity of settlement from within in both the Levant and Greco-Roman regions, this self-perception styles these 'young' peoples as coming into these areas from outside.

66.　The Aramaeans had already been settled in their own territory, long before the 'young' people settled between Beer-Sheva and Gerar and the southern coast. On the Philistines that arrived from the Aegean area by the twelfth century BCE, see Howard 1994 and the rich literature cited there.

67.　Hamilton (1995: 150) claims that the preference for Aramaeans comes from the prohibition to marry the local peoples in order to prevent them from possessing the land.

68.　This tendency was subverted already by Abraham (in his marriage to Keturah), and more so in the generation of Jacob's sons, though details are known only about three of them: Judah, Joseph and Simeon (Gen. 38.2; 41.45; 46.10, 20).

Genesis 31 stands last in the sequence of sources referring to Jacob's Aramaean origin and marriage connections, and it takes a special position in it. The author of Genesis 31 knows not only the Haran stories, but some of the Abraham and Isaac stories as well. More interesting is the fact that the author of Genesis 31 polemicizes against Deut. 26.5, where Jacob is clearly identified as Aramaean, refuting this option through every possible avenue. Genesis 31 closes the Haran chapters by adding a hidden polemic that rests precisely on the explicit connection of Jacob with Laban, with Haran. The author of this revision seems to have understood ארמי אבד אבי according to its ethnic meaning and could not make peace with this identification. In his hidden polemic he wrestles with the implications of Jacob's presentation as an outsider. Neither by ancestors nor by religion, language, or geographical territory is Jacob the least bit Aramaean!

Nevertheless, Genesis 31 follows the consensus on Jacob's foreign origin; in fact, it further augments the account of Jacob's departure by framing it within the literary pattern of Abraham's לך לך emigration. Although actually born in the land of Canaan, Jacob is styled as another outsider commanded by God to return/emigrate back to Canaan following more than twenty years abroad; and he brings with him his wives and children, themselves born and raised outside of Canaan, in far away Haran.

The relative order of the discussed texts, thus, may be seen as follows: (1) The Haran stories (Genesis 29–30); (2) the priestly passages (25.19-20; 27.46–28.9); (3) Deut. 26.5; (4) Jacob's departure from Laban the Aramaean (ch. 31). Of course, it is most difficult and speculative to turn the relative chronology of these texts into a definitive chronology.

The explicit polemics on the question of Israelite identity versus the Canaanites seem to date to the eighth and seventh centuries BCE, and this may be the time and context whence the Deuteronomic *credo* evolved.

The choice of the Aramaeans as the forefathers' family-ethnic background seems to be based on their special history. While the Aramaeans had not established a unified powerful political entity in any of the regions they had settled in during the second and the first millennia BCE, excepting perhaps the kingdom of Damascus, they did attain a growing cultural influence (through the spread of their language and script) in the ancient Near East, especially after they had ceased to have an independent kingdom and became an Assyrian province (after 732 BCE). Aramaic became the *lingua franca* of the Assyrian empire from about the second half of the eighth century BCE, and this linguistic hegemony lasted throughout the Babylonian and Persian periods as well.[69] Hence, this Aramaic context suggests several possible

69. The identity of the Aramaeans and the period that may suit the description of family connections with them have intrigued both traditional and critical exegetes (Dion 1995). Of the diverse options, I find convincing the period when the Aramaean kingdoms

historical points at which an Aramaean identity could have been considered a prestigious 'outsider' status (Machinist 1994: 51-60). Genesis 31, while it must be dated after the Priestly passages and after Deut. 26.5, nevertheless tries to validate a national Israelite identity within the land, eschewing the 'outsider' dynamic; thus, it may be quite close in time to the texts it polemicizes against and may also be dated to the time of Josiah, i.e., the end of the seventh century BCE.

This leaves us with Genesis 24, which has been dated to the Persian period based on linguistic, literary, and ideological arguments.[70] When it comes to the question of ethnic identity, however, this chapter shows great conservatism, espousing the traditional lineage that connects the forefathers with the Nahorite family in Haran. The evidence for the relative lateness of this passage allows for the possibility that Genesis 24 *purposely* avoids any mention of this lineage as Aramaean. This avoidance may thus be taken as another stance in the hidden polemic over Jacob's Aramaean identity—that is, Genesis 24 takes a stand against the positive construal of that characteristic in the Priestly passages (and Deut. 26.5), just as it implicitly refutes the negative construal thereof in Genesis 31. In contradistinction to Genesis 31, Genesis 24 joins the earliest stories (chs. 29–30) in focusing only on the family connections of Abraham (and Isaac) to Rebecca, Nahor, and Milcah.[71]

These last observations point to several possible historical contexts for both the explicit and the hidden polemics. Contextualizing them all as of the eighth, and more probably the seventh centuries BCE, these explicit polemics

---

ceased to exist politically, after they were subjugated by the Assyrians in the 30's of the eighth century BCE.

70. But see Rendsburg (2002: 23-46, especially, 23-35), who challenges Rofé's reliance on the linguistic data for dating the story as late. Rendsburg finds Genesis 24's unique language (mostly Aramaisms and MH equivalents) to be an intentional Aramaic flavor given to the story to validate its geographical setting in Haran (pp. 24, 31-32). Furthermore, Rendsburg brings evidence for its pre-exilic (SBH) origin which, following Polak (1998: 59-105), he suggests to even be dated in the early monarchic period (pp. 32-35). Following this line of thought, Genesis 24's avoidance of mentioning Laban (and the Nahorite family) as Aramaean, is even more outstanding.

71. The late dating of ch. 24 may rest on a variety of arguments. In reference to the issue of separation from the women of the land, as well as in the matter of the 'outsider' conception of origins, ch. 24 does not accord with the polemics of Ezra–Nehemiah. The only possible connection may be that the story adds a hitherto unknown position to this debate, since ch. 24 might be seen as legitimizing marriage connections between the Repatriates and their parent-community in Babylon, distanced physically from their repatriates-relatives that are now settled in Yehud. Were there such marriages being attempted? Would this have seemed like an attractive solution to the problem posed by the ban on local intermarriage? These questions are unanswered in the sources at hand. Nevertheless, the differences between Genesis 24 and Ezra–Nehemiah should not be disregarded.

touch upon the crucial issue of Israelite identity in the Canaanite arena. The implicit polemic over Jacob's Aramaic identity arose out of that explicit encounter, which called forth attempts to refute the identification of Jacob as 'a wandering Aramaean'. This discussion leaves open the option that these explicit and hidden polemics were reevaluated and nuanced time and again even through the Persian period. However, there is no need to designate the Persian period as specifically the time when they came into being.

Bibliography

Amit, Yairah
    2000   *Hidden Polemics in Biblical Narrative* (trans. Jonathan Chipman; Biblical Interpretation Series, 25; Leiden: E.J. Brill).
    2003   *Hidden Polemics in Biblical Narrative* (Tel Aviv: Yediot Aharonot and Hemed [Hebrew]).

Buber, Martin
    1964   *Darko shel Mikra* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute [Hebrew]).

Cassuto, Umberto
    1961   *The Documentary Hypothesis and the Composition of the Pentateuch: Eight Lectures* (trans. I. Abrahams; Jerusalem: Magnes Press).

Cohn, Robert L.
    1983   'Narrative Structure and Canonical Perspective in Genesis', *JSOT* 25: 3-16.

Craigie, Peter C.
    1976   *Deuteronomy* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans).

Daube, David
    1963   *The Exodus Pattern in the Bible* (London: Faber & Faber).

Dion, Paul E.
    1995   'Aramaean Tribes and Nations of First Millennium Western Asia', *CANE* II: 1281-94.

Driver, Samuel R.
    1901   *Deuteronomy* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 3rd edn).

Daniels, Dwight R.
    1990   'The Creed of Deuteronomy XXVI Revisited', in J.A. Emerton (ed.), *Studies in the Pentateuch* (VTSup, 41; Leiden: E.J. Brill): 231-42.

Eichler, Barry L.
    1977   'Another Look at the Nuzi Sistership Contracts', in M. de Jong Ellis (ed.), *Essays on the Ancient Near East in the Memory of Jacob Joel Finkelstein* (Hamden, CT: Academy by Archon, 1977): 45-59.

Fishbane, Michael
    1975   'Composition and Structure in the Jacob Cycle', *JJS* 26: 15-38.

Finkelstein, Jacob J.
    1968   'An Old Babylonian Herding Contract and Gen. 31:38f.', *JAOS* 88: 30-36.

Fokkelman, Jan P.
    1975   *Narrative Art in Genesis* (Assen: Van Gorcum).

Gordon, Cyrus H.
    1936   'The Status of Women in the Nuzi Tablets', *ZA*: 147-69.
    1937   'The Story of Jacob and Laban in Light of the Nuzi Tablets', *BASOR* 66: 25-27.
Greenberg, Moshe
    1962   'Another Look at Rachel's Theft of the Teraphim', *JBL* 81: 239-48.
Greenfield, Jonas C.
    1981   'Aramaic Studies and the Bible', in J.A. Emerton (ed.), *Congress Volume: Vienna 1980* (VTSup, 32; Leiden: E.J. Brill): 110-30.
Gunkel, Hermann
    1997   *Genesis* (trans. M.E. Biddle; Macon, GA: Mercer University Press).
Hamilton, Victor P.
    1995   *Genesis 18–50* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans).
Heard, Christopher
    2001   *Dynamics of Diselection: Ambiguity in Genesis 12–36 and Ethnic Boundaries in Post-Exilic Judah* (SBLSemSt, 39; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature).
Hillers, Delbert R.
    1972   'Pahad Yishaq', *JBL* 91: 90-92.
Hoerth, A.J., G.L. Mattingly and E.M. Yamauchi (eds.)
    1994   *Peoples of the Old Testament World* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press).
Howard, David M.
    1994   'Philistines', in Hoerth, Mattingly and Yamauchi 1994: 231-50.
Hutchinson, John, and Anthony D. Smith
    1996   'Introduction', in John Hutchison and Anthony D. Smith (eds.), *Ethnicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press): 4-16.
Ishida, Tomoo
    1979   'The Structure and Historical Implications of the Lists of Pre-Israelite Nations', *Biblica* 60: 461-69.
Machinist, Peter
    1991   'The Question of Distinctiveness in Ancient Israel: An Essay', in M. Cogan and I. Eph'al (eds.), *Ah, Assyria…: Studies in Assyrian History and Ancient Near Eastern Historiography Presented to Hayim Tadmor* (Eretz Israel, 33; Jerusalem: Magnes Press): 196-212.
    1994   'Outsiders or Insiders: The Biblical View of Emergent Israel and Its Contexts', in L.J. Silberstein and R.L. Cohn (ed.), *The Other in Jewish Thought and History: Constructions of Jewish Culture and Identity* (New York: New York University Press): 35-60.
Malul, Meir
    1985   'More on PAHAD YISHAQ (Genesis XXXI 42, 53) and the Oath by the Thigh', *VT* 35: 192-200.
McCarthy, Dennis J.
    1978   *Treaty and Covenant* (Analecta Biblica, 21a; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 2nd edn).
Millard, Alan R.
    1980   'A Wandering Aramaean', *JNES* 39: 153-55.
Nelson, Richard D.
    2002   *Deuteronomy* (OTL; Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press).

Pitard, Wayne T.
    1994   'Aramaeans', in Hoerth, Mattingly and Yamauchi 1994: 207-30.
Polak, Frank
    1998   'The Oral and the Written: Syntax, Stylistics, and the Development of
                Biblical Prose Narratives', *JANES* 26: 59-105.
Rad, Gerhard von
    1966   *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (trans. E.W. Trueman
                Dicken; Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd).
    1966a   *Deuteronomy* (trans. D. Barton; OTL; London: SCM Press).
    1972   *Genesis* (trans. J.H. Marks; OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster Press).
Rendsburg, Gary A.
    2002   'Some False Leads in the Identification of Late Biblical Hebrew Texts:
                The Cases of Genesis 24 and 1 Samuel 2:27-36', *JBL* 121:23-46.
Rofé, Alexander
    1988   'The Ceremony of the 'First' (26:1-11)', in *Introduction to Deuteronomy*
                (Jerusalem: Akademon, 1988): 49-55.
    1990   'An Enquiry into the Betrothal of Rebekah', in Erhard Blum, Ch. Macholz
                and E. W. Stegemann (eds.), *Die Hebräische Bibel und ihre zweifache
                Nachgeschichte: Festschrift für Rolf Rendtorff zum 65. Geburtstag*
                (Neukirchen–Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag): 27-39.
Sarna, Nahum M.
    1989   *Genesis* (JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication
                Society).
Savran, George W.
    1988   *Telling and Retelling: Quotation in Biblical Narrative* (Bloomington:
                Indiana University Press).
Skinner, John
    1930   *Genesis* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2nd edn).
Smith, Anthony D.
    1986   *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell).
Speight, R. Marston
    1987   'Creeds', in M. Eliade (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York:
                Macmillan): 138-40.
Speiser, Ephraim A.
    1964   *Genesis* (AB, 1; Garden City, NY: Doubleday).
Speiser, Ephraim A., and Robert H. Pfeiffer (eds.)
  1935–1936   *One Hundred New Selected Nuzi Texts* (AASOR, 16; New Haven:
                AASOR).
Steiner, Richard C.
    1997   '"Aramaean" of Deuteronomy 26.5 "*Peshat*" and "*Derash*"', in M. Cogan,
                B.L. Eichler and J.H. Tigay (eds.), *Tehillah le-Moshe: Biblical and Judaic
                Studies in Honor of Moshe Greenberg* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns):
                127-38.
Sternberg, Meir
    1987   *Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of
                Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2nd edn).

Tigay, Jeffrey H.
    1996   *Deuteronomy* (JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication
             Society).
Van Seters, John
    1975   *Abraham in History and Tradition* (New Haven/London: Yale University
             Press).
Westermann, Claus
    1995   *Genesis 12–36* (trans. J.J Scullion; Minneapolis: Augsburg).
Wevers, John W.
    1995   *Notes on the Greek Text of Deuteronomy* (SBLSCS, 39; Atlanta: Scholars
             Press).