

The Post-Priestly Pentateuch

New Perspectives on its Redactional Development
and Theological Profiles

edited by

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The Joseph Story in the Book of Genesis: Pre-P or Post-P?

Thomas Römer

“In exegesis, the best solution is the one that explains most simply the greatest amount of data” (Jean Louis Ska).¹

There are very few things about which scholars agree in regard to the biblical story of Joseph, embedded in Gen 37–50. A majority would probably agree that the Joseph story is quite different from the foregoing narratives about Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and also that we have here an impressive piece of narrative art and story-telling. But as soon as the question of the literary unity of the story comes up, opinions diverge.² The divergences grow when one discusses the reconstruction of the original story and its date and historical setting. There is also some debate whether the Joseph narrative was intended from the beginning as a conclusion for the Patriarchal history or as a transition between the time of the ancestors and the period of the Egyptian oppression and the exodus or whether it was intended first as an independent story.

However, there may be a point on which most scholars would agree: the *terminus ad quem* for the composition of the Joseph narrative is the Priestly document or the Priestly redactor that presupposed the story about Joseph and his brothers or integrated it. But does this consensus rest on firm ground? In order to answer this question we need to discuss briefly the following questions: literary unity, autonomy and historical context of the Joseph story.

¹ J.L. SKA, *Introduction to Reading the Pentateuch* (trans. Sr. Pascale Dominique; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 68. It is my honor and pleasure to offer these reflections to Jean Louis Ska, an esteemed colleague and a very good friend, whose expertise in the field of Pentateuchal research is for me a source of ongoing stimulation and inspiration.

² For an overview of the recent history of research see C. PAAP, *Die Josephsgeschichte Genesis 37–50. Bestimmungen ihrer literarischen Gattung in der zweiten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts* (EHS.T 534; Frankfurt/M. et al.: P. Lang, 1994) and F.W. GOLKA, “Genesis 37–50: Joseph Story or *Israel*-Joseph Story?,” *CBR* 2.2 (2004), 153–177.

The literary coherence of the Joseph narrative

Every attentive reader of the book of Genesis notices the differences between the narrative about Joseph and the one about the patriarchs in Gen 12–36. Whereas the stories about Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their wives are patchworks of a sort combining former independent narratives or smaller cycles, the narrative about Joseph and his brothers is a straightforward story and not a combination of former independent units. One can also observe a theology that is quite different: whereas Abraham, Isaac and Jacob receive divine speeches telling them what to do or informing them about future events, Joseph never enters in any direct communication with God. These differences point to the fact that different author(s) put together the Joseph story and the Abraham, Isaac and Jacob one. The Joseph story has its own style and its own plot. Gerhard von Rad was one of the first to underline the literary unity of the Joseph story and its wisdom flair in contrast to the Patriarchal narratives. He praised the literary artistry of the Joseph story, but still postulated a J-version and an E-version that later redactors combined³. The separation of the Joseph-story into a Yahwistic and an Elohist version still has its supporters even today⁴, but no one ever succeeded in reconstructing two coherent independent narratives⁵. First of all, the classical criterion of the Documentary hypothesis, namely the use of different divine names, does not work at all for this narrative (the tetragrammaton only appears in Gen 39). Second, there are indeed many cases of “doublets” (two dreams of Joseph, two dreams that he interprets when he is in prison, the brothers travel to Egypt two times where they meet Joseph twice, etc.). But most of these repetitions are part of the author’s narrative strategy and are necessary for understanding the plot of

³ G. VON RAD, “Josephsgeschichte und ältere Chokmah,” in *Congress Volume. Copenhagen 1953* (VT.S 1; Leiden: Brill, 1953), 120–127; see also IDEM, *Das erste Buch Mose. Genesis* (ATD 2–4; 4th edition; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972), 283–284.

⁴ See for instance L. SCHMIDT, *Literarische Studien zur Josefsgeschichte* (BZAW 167; Berlin / New York: de Gruyter, 1986); L. RUPPERT, “Zur neueren Diskussion um die Joseferzählung in der Genesis,” *BZ.NF* 33 (1989), 92–97; J.S. BADEN, *The Composition of the Pentateuch: Renewing the Documentary Hypothesis* (ABRL; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 34–44. See also H. SEEBASS, *Genesis III. Josephgeschichte (37,1–50,26)* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner Verlag, 2000), who however is much more cautious as some of his colleagues. He emphasizes that the Joseph story is “wegen ihrer formalen Geschlossenheit im Pentateuch singular” (6) and admits an important post-priestly redaction (210–211).

⁵ Despite the statement of B.J. SCHWARTZ, “How the Compiler of the Pentateuch Worked: The Composition of Genesis 37,” in *The Book of Genesis. Composition, Reception, and Interpretation* (ed. C.A. Evans, et al.; VT.S 152 (FIOTL 6); Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2012), 263–278.

the story⁶. This does not mean, however, that the original Joseph narrative should be identified with all the chapters and passages contained in Gen 37–50. Obviously, chapters 38 and 46; as well as 48–49 do not belong to the original Joseph story⁷.

Gen 50:24–25 is a late passage that combines a Pentateuchal and a Hexateuchal redaction. Verse 24 with the theme of the oath to the Patriarchs provides together with Deut 34:4 a frame for the Pentateuch. V. 25 belongs to a Hexateuchal redaction introducing the motif of Joseph's bones that are buried in Josh 24:32⁸. The passage where Joseph invents capitalism and makes the Egyptians into slaves of Pharaoh (47:13–26) is also an addition⁹. This account does not fit well with the context of the Joseph narrative: it does not mention Joseph's brothers and contradicts Joseph's advice to Pharaoh as well as his actions in 41:25–56*.

Finally there is the case of the story of Potiphar's wife in Gen 39, which most probably is also an addition to the original narrative¹⁰. Jean Louis Ska

⁶ See already B. JACOB, *Das erste Buch der Tora. Genesis übersetzt und erklärt* (Berlin: Schocken Verlag, 1934), passim, who however rejects any diachronic analysis. Very influential was the essay of H. DONNER, *Die literarische Gestalt der alttestamentlichen Josephsgeschichte* (Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philologisch-historische Klasse, Abh. 2; Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1976); cf also R.N. WHYBRAY, "The Joseph Story and Pentateuchal Criticism," *VT* 18 (1968), 522–528 and G.W. COATS, "Redactional Unity in Genesis 37–50," *JBL* 93 (1974), 15–21.

⁷ This is widely acknowledged. Gen 38 is a story about Judah, who, in contrast to the Joseph narrative, is already a quite old and married man. The tribal sentences in Gen 49 are originally unrelated to the Joseph narrative (J.-D. MACCHI, *Israël et ses tribus selon Genèse 49* [OBO 171; Fribourg / Göttingen: Presses universitaires – Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999], 235–243). Gen 46 and 48 are late insertions the aim of which is to strengthen the link with the foregoing Patriarchal narratives and to prepare the Exodus story (see E. BLUM, *Die Komposition der Vätergeschichte* [WMANT 57; Neukirchener-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1984], 246–254).

⁸ See already D.B. REDFORD, *A Study of the Biblical Story of Joseph (Genesis 37–50)* (SVT 20; Leiden: Brill, 1970), 25, who speaks of a "Genesis editor"; BLUM, *Vätergeschichte* (see n. 7), 255–257; T. RÖMER, *Israels Väter. Untersuchungen zur Väterthematik im Deuteronomium und in der deuteronomistischen Tradition* (OBO 99; Freiburg (CH) / Göttingen: Universitätsverlag – Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990), 561–566; T. RÖMER and M.Z. BRETTLER, "Deuteronomy 34 and the Case for a Persian Hexateuch," *JBL* 119 (2000), 401–419, 410.

⁹ H. SEEBASS, *Geschichtliche Zeit und theonome Tradition in der Joseph-Erzählung* (Gütersloh: G. Mohn, 1978), 58–61; P. WEIMAR, "Gen 47,13–26 – ein irritierender Abschnitt im Rahmen der Josefsgeschichte," in *Auf dem Weg zur Endgestalt von Genesis bis II Regum. Festschrift für Hans-Christoph Schmitt zu seinem 65. Geburtstag* (ed. M. Beck and U. Schorn; BZAW 370; Berlin / New York: de Gruyter, 2006), 125–138.

¹⁰ See already B.D. EERDMANS, *Die Komposition der Genesis* (Alttestamentliche Studien 1; Giessen: A. Töpelman, 1908), 66–67; REDFORD, *Study* (see n. 8), 147; N. KEBEKUS, *Die Joseferzählung. Literarkritische und redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen*

has summarized the arguments that support this idea: this is this only story in which the name of Yhwh appears; at the end of Gen 39 Joseph gains a prestigious position in prison; but in Gen 40 he is serving two prisoners¹¹.

“Moreover, the conclusion of this chapter is not completely satisfying from a narrative point of view, because the misdeed of Potiphar’s wife remains undiscovered and unpunished [...] this leads us to think that an editor inserted this chapter, with some minor changes, into another, existing chapter”¹².

It is possible that Gen 39 was an independent (Joseph?) story modeled on the Egyptian Tale of the Two Brothers that was inserted into the original story by a redactor¹³.

Now we still have to address the question of the “competition” between Reuben and Judah, the main characters and spokesmen among Joseph’s brothers. This competition has led to the assumption that one should distinguish a “Reuben version” and a “Judah version” in the Joseph narrative, or to the claim that the original story contained only Reuben and was then revised by the introduction of Judah¹⁴ in order to present the Joseph narrative as a story showing the reconciliation between the North (Joseph) and the South (Judah)¹⁵. But the other option is also possible: the Judah layer belongs to the original story, because his personal guarantee as well as his speech in Gen 44:18–34 are necessary for the scene of reconciliation in chapter 44¹⁶. The

zu *Genesis 37–50* (Internationale Hochschulschriften; Münster / New York: Waxmann, 1990), 31–45; K.D. LISEWSKI, *Studien zu Motiven und Themen zur Josefsgeschichte der Genesis* (EHS.T 881; Bern et al.: Lang, 2008), 321–324 speaks of a “Fremdkörper”. Other authors envisage a revision of an older story in Gen 39: P. WEIMAR, “‘Jahwe aber ward mit Josef’ (Gen 39,2). Eine Geschichte von programmatischer Bedeutung,” in *Studien zur Josefsgeschichte* (SBA 44; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2008), 61–124; C. LEVIN, “Righteousness in the Joseph Story: Joseph Resists Seduction (Genesis 39),” in *The Pentateuch, International Perspectives on Current Research* (ed. T.B. Dozeman, et al.; FAT 78; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 223–240, 229–230 reconstructs an original text in which Yhwh is not mentioned.

¹¹ See also the difference between “prison” and “house of the guard”.

¹² SKA, *Introduction* (see n. 1), 206–207.

¹³ REDFORD, *Study* (see n. 8), 147; SKA, *Introduction*, (see n. 1), 206–207.

¹⁴ W. DIETRICH, *Die Josephserzählung als Novelle und Geschichtsschreibung. Zugleich ein Beitrag zur Pentateuchfrage* (Biblich theologische Studien; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1989), 20–22; KEBEKUS, *Joseferzählung* (see n. 10), 231–336, who distinguishes a Reuben basic layer, a Reuben redaction and a Judah redaction. See also MACCHI, *Israël* (see n. 7), 127–128 and SKA, *Introduction* (see n. 1), 207.

¹⁵ For this interpretation see G. FISCHER, “Die Josefsgeschichte als Modell für Versöhnung,” in *Studies in the Book of Genesis. Literature, Redaction and History* (ed. A. Wénin; BETL 155; Leuven: University Press – Peeters, 2001), 243–271, 270–271.

¹⁶ K. SCHMID, “Die Josephsgeschichte im Pentateuch,” in *Abschied vom Jahwisten. Die Komposition des Hexateuch in der jüngsten Diskussion* (ed. J.C. Gertz, et al.; BZAW 315; Berlin / New York: de Gruyter, 2002), 83–118, 105.

Reuben layer would then belong to a later redactor¹⁷ who wanted to clear all brothers of blame by presenting a positive image of the firstborn¹⁸. The latter explanation sounds somewhat constrained. As several authors have underlined, it is not easy or not convincing to reconstruct an older story that contains only the interventions either of Reuben or of Judah, thus one should imagine that the original narrative already contained both characters, an assumption that does not necessarily exclude punctual revisions¹⁹. One could perhaps explain the shift from Reuben to Judah through a comparison with Num 1–2. Indeed, in Num 1–2, the census of Israel’s tribes starts with the tribe of Reuben, the first-born, but, when it comes to the organization of the camp, the east side led by Judah is mentioned first, which is a subtle way to emphasize Judah’s importance²⁰. The Joseph narrative may reflect a similar situation: the author presupposes an audience familiar with the list of the twelve tribes or Jacob’s twelve sons, according to which Reuben is the first-born. As first-born, he has to play an important role. Yet, the author also wanted to show the importance of Judah, who ends up becoming a more central figure than Reuben.

To summarize, we may construct the original Joseph narrative *grosso modo* as contained in Gen 37*;²¹ 40–45*;²¹ 46:28–33; 47:1–12; 50:1–11, 14–21, 26.

Dating the Joseph narrative

The different proposals to date the Joseph narrative cover almost eight hundred years, going from the time of Solomon²² to the Seleucid period²³. The

¹⁷ See especially H.-C. SCHMITT, *Die nichtpriesterliche Josephsgeschichte. Ein Beitrag zur neuesten Pentateuchkritik* (BZAW 154; Berlin / New York: de Gruyter, 1980).

¹⁸ SCHMID, “Josephsgeschichte,” (see n. 16), 105.

¹⁹ PAAP, *Josephsgeschichte* (see n. 2), 168–169 and in a detailed way K. WEINGART, *Stämmevolk – Staatsvolk – Gottesvolk?: Studien zur Verwendung des Israel-Namens im Alten Testament* (FAT II/68; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 247–251.

²⁰ See also D.T. OLSON, *The Death of the Old and the Birth of the New. The Framework of the Book of Numbers and the Pentateuch* (Brown Judaic Studies 71; Chico, Ca: Scholars Press, 1985), 60–61.

²¹ According to some authors such as DIETRICH, *Josephserzählung* (see n. 14), 40; KEBEKUS, *Joseferzählung* (see n. 10), 149–152; R.G. KRATZ, *Die Komposition der erzählenden Bücher des Alten Testaments. Grundwissen der Bibelkritik* (UTB 2157; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 281–286, Gen 45* would have been the end of the original narrative. However Gen 45:5–8 prepares 50:18–21 Joseph’s speech in 50:19–21 is the necessary conclusion of Gen 37: Joseph’s brothers are now falling down before him, but in a situation in which they respect his position.

²² VON RAD, “Josephsgeschichte” (see n. 3), followed by SEEBASS, *Zeit* (see n. 9), 102.

²³ B.J. DIEBNER, “Le roman de Joseph, ou Israël en Égypte. Un midrash post-exilique de la Tora,” in *Le livre de traverse. De l’exégèse biblique à l’anthropologie* (ed. O. Abel

Solomonic date relies heavily on the ideas of a Solomonic empire and a “Solomonic enlightenment” (von Rad) and both do not correspond to any historical reality²⁴. On the other hand, a date of composition in the 3rd or even 2nd century BCE seems implausible when one considers the formation of the Pentateuch during the second half of the Persian period.

Because the name Joseph appears several times in the Hebrew Bible as a designation for the North²⁵, many scholars are in favor of a Northern origin for the Joseph narrative.

W. Dietrich has suggested the context of Jeroboam I’s rule. Joseph would have been conceived as a Jeroboam in disguise: Joseph’s rise to power would have been a legitimization of Jeroboam’s reign²⁶. Although there may exist some literary parallels between Jeroboam’s flight to Egypt and Joseph’s descent to Egypt²⁷, the narrative situations are quite different: In 1 Kgs 11, Jeroboam comes back from his Egyptian exile in order to rule, whereas Joseph never becomes king and remains in Egypt until his death.

N. Kebekus has suggested another Northern setting. He rightly highlights that Joseph should not be understood as a royal figure, and thinks that he represents senior officials of the royal court²⁸. A possible *terminus a quo* would be the fall of Samaria in 722 BCE and the transfer of Northern traditions to the South. Thus, a possible historical setting for the Ruben-Grundschrift would be the reign of Hezekiah²⁹: in the book of Proverbs, this king is connected with the collection of wisdom traditions, and the Joseph story seems indeed influenced by wisdom concepts³⁰.

and F. Smyth; Patrimoines; Paris: Cerf, 1992), 55–71 (he seems even to think of the Roman period); J.A. SOGGIN, “Notes on the Joseph Story,” in *Understanding Poets and Prophets. Essays in Honor of George Wishart Anderson* (ed. A.G. Auld; JSOT.S 152; Sheffield: Academic Press, 1993), 336–349; A. CATASTINI, “Ancora sulla datazione della ‘Storia di Giuseppe’,” *Henoch* 20 (1998), 208–224; A. KUNZ, “Ägypten in der Perspektive Israels am Beispiel der Josefsgeschichte (Gen 37–50),” *BZ* 47 (2003), 206–229.

²⁴ SCHMID, “Josephsgeschichte,” (see n. 16), 105–106.

²⁵ In a “neutral” way as “house of Joseph” in Judg 1:22–23,35; 2 Sam 19:20; 1 Kgs 11:28; in prophetic oracles of destruction and rejection: Am 5:6,15; Obad 18; Ps 78:67; in postexilic announcements of restoration: Ezek 37:16,19; 47:13; 48:32; Ps 77:15.

²⁶ DIETRICH, *Josephserzählung* (see n. 14), 58–66.

²⁷ R. LUX, *Josef: der Auserwählte unter seinen Brüdern* (Biblische Gestalten 1; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2001), 242–244.

²⁸ KEBEKUS, *Joseferzählung* (see n. 10), 253.

²⁹ KEBEKUS, *Joseferzählung* (see n. 10), 254–255. See similarly P. WEIMAR, “Josef – Eine Geschichte vom schwierigen Prozeß der Versöhnung (1995),” in *Studien zur Josefsgeschichte* (ed. SBA 44; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2008), 9–26, 22–23, n. 37.

³⁰ See already von Rad and recently M. FOX, “Joseph and Wisdom,” in *The Book of Genesis, Composition, Reception, and Interpretation* (ed. C.A. Evans, et al.; VT.S 152; Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2012), 231–262.

E. Blum has also opted for a Northern context of the Joseph story³¹ and his student, K. Weingart, has taken up and developed his arguments³². Blum depends on Crüsemann's idea, that the main theme of the Joseph's story is dominion³³. The question of the brothers in Gen 37:8 ("Are you indeed to reign over us? Are you indeed to have dominion over us?") would indicate that the theme of the narrative is Joseph's kingdom in Israel³⁴. Weingart suggests one should read the Joseph narrative as a "Ringens um Benjamin" (252). The story insists on the close relation between Joseph and Benjamin: "Die auslösende Frage ist daher nicht, ob Benjamin zu Joseph gehört, sondern wie er zu Joseph kommt" (254). The Joseph narrative should therefore be understood as "political propaganda" for the Israelite kingdom (when exactly?) because it shows that Benjamin belongs to Joseph/Israel³⁵. However, this kind of "historical allegory" is problematic. If one wants to read the story as a conflict about Benjamin, one could also and perhaps should think of the situation after 722 BCE when Benjamin comes to Judah. One should then read Judah's defense of Benjamin as an indication that Benjamin belongs to Judah³⁶. Yet, in my view, a close reading of the Joseph story reveals a rather different role for Benjamin. The question is not at all whether he belongs to Israel or to Judah, but rather how the brothers will behave towards him. The author uses plot symmetry and constructs Benjamin increasingly as a "second Joseph"³⁷: he becomes the new preferred son of Jacob, and he is also singled out by Joseph, who gives him a much bigger portion of food (43:34) and then accuses him to be a thief (44:1–13). But in contrast to what the brothers did to Joseph, they accept Jacob's and Joseph's preferential treatment of Benjamin, and even show solidarity when the latter is accused by Joseph. This change of behavior leads then to the reconciliation described in chapter 45. The plot is therefore not about the destiny of Benjamin per se, but about the possible reconciliation of the whole family.

³¹ BLUM, *Vätergeschichte* (see n. 7), 239–244.

³² WEINGART, *Stämmevolk* (see n. 19). A Northern origin is also postulated by SKA, *Introduction* (see n. 1), 207.

³³ F. CRÜSEMANN, *Der Widerstand gegen das Königtum. Die antiköniglichen Texte des Alten Testaments und der Kampf um den frühen israelitischen Staat* (WMANT 49; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1978), 143–155. See also C. WESTERMANN, *Genesis. 3. Teilband Genesis 37–50* (BK I/3; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1982), 29–30.

³⁴ BLUM, *Vätergeschichte* (see n. 7), 242; WEINGART, *Stämmevolk* (see n. 19), 245.

³⁵ WEINGART, *Stämmevolk* (see n. 19), 262–266.

³⁶ Y. LEVIN, "Joseph, Judah and the 'Benjamin Conundrum'," *ZAW* 116 (2004), 223–241, 239–240.

³⁷ J. LAMBERT, *Le Dieu distribué. Une anthologie comparée des monothéismes* (Patri-moines; Paris: Cerf, 1995), 51.

A Northern setting and a preexilic date for the Joseph story also fail to give a satisfying explanation for the forced descent of Joseph to Egypt and for the fact that Joseph stays there until his death. If Joseph's story is "political propaganda" (Weingart) for the Northern kingdom, why would one locate the story in Egypt and even leave the hero in this land at the end of the story? Not surprisingly, the explanations in favor of a Northern setting and a preexilic date downplay the Egyptian location of the story. According to Kebekus, the author has chosen an Egyptian setting of the story "als Mittel literarischer Verfremdung"³⁸. For Weingart, it shows that the Joseph narrative was conceived as a "Zwischenstück zwischen Erzelternerzählungen und Exodus"³⁹, an assumption difficult to maintain⁴⁰. There is no doubt that the author of the narrative is keen to give details about Egyptian names and customs, and even attributes a cup of divination to Joseph (44:5). If narrative necessity is the only reason for the location of the story in Egypt, why should the author tell us that Joseph married the daughter of an Egyptian priest (41:45), so that his sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, are half Egyptian (41:50–52)? Or why would he relate the fact that Joseph after his death was embalmed like an Egyptian high officer (50:3)?

It is easiest to explain the attention given to describing the Egyptian integration and career of Joseph if one assumes that the Joseph story is a "diaspora novella" and was conceived in order to reflect the possibilities for a life outside of the land. A. Meinhold was one of the firsts to suggest this theory⁴¹. He noticed the structural parallels in the stories of Esther, Dan 2–6 and Gen 37–50*. His proposal is increasingly accepted in scholarship⁴². It is the best

³⁸ KEBEKUS, *Joseferzählung* (see n. 10), 250.

³⁹ WEINGART, *Stämmevolk* (see n. 19), 265.

⁴⁰ As mentioned above, E. Blum and others have demonstrated, that texts like Gen 48 and 50:24–25 were inserted into the Joseph narrative in order to integrate it into the broader context of the Penta- or Hexateuch: this is an indication that the original Joseph story was not intended as a bridge between the Patriarchs and the Exodus.

⁴¹ A. MEINHOLD, "Die Gattung der Josephsgeschichte und des Estherbuches: Diasporanovelle I, II," *ZAW* 87, 88 (1975–1976), 306–324; 72–93.

⁴² T. RÖMER, "Joseph approché. Source du cycle, corpus, unité," in *Le livre de traverse. De l'exégèse biblique à l'anthropologie* (ed. O. Abel and F. Smyth; Patrimoines; Paris: Cerf, 1992), 73–85; A. CATASTINI, *Storia di Giuseppe (Genesi 37–50)* (Venezia: Marsilio 1994); J.-M. HUSSER, "L'histoire de Joseph," in *La Bible et sa culture. Ancien Testament* (ed. M. Quesnel and P. Gruson; Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2000), 112–122; KRATZ, *Komposition* (see n. 21), 285–286; T. RÖMER, "La narration, une subversion. L'histoire de Joseph (Gn 37–50) et les romans de la diaspora," in *Narrativity in Biblical and Related Texts* (ed. G.J. Brooke and J.-D. Kaestli; BETL 149; Leuven: University Press – Peeters, 2000), 17–29; C. UEHLINGER, "Fratricide, filiations et paternités dans l'histoire de Joseph (Genèse 37–50*)," in *Jacob. Commentaire à plusieurs voix de Gen. 25–36. Mélanges offerts à Albert de Pury* (ed. J.-D. Macchi and T. Römer; Le Monde de la Bible 44; Genève: Labor et Fides, 2001), 303–328; M.J. GUEVARA LLAGUNA, *Esplendor en la diáspora*

hypothesis to understand the historical setting and the intention of the narration. A late date for the Joseph story is plausible for the following reasons: if the Joseph story comes from a Northern heritage, like the Jacob story and the Exodus narrative, then one has to explain why it is never mentioned outside of the Hexateuch, in contrast to the Jacob and Exodus traditions. The only clear allusion to the Joseph story can be found in Psalm 105:16–22, which is contemporary with the promulgation of the Pentateuch⁴³.

The author's knowledge of Egypt and Egyptian civilization seems more important than what is sometimes stated⁴⁴. The Egyptologist Redford has shown that most allusions to Egyptian names, customs and situation belong to the Saite and later times⁴⁵. The author is also aware of Egyptian literature and uses it, especially the story of Sinuhe⁴⁶. One should not ignore these observations too quickly.

Finally the theology and the exclusive use of "elohim"⁴⁷ also point to a late date for the Joseph story. Interestingly, the narrator never suggests any divine intervention. All comments about God's involvement appear on the lips of the protagonists (Joseph, Jacob, Pharaoh, the brothers). Therefore, one can read the story in a totally "profane" way, or accept the theological interpretations given by Joseph or other actors. This brings the Joseph story close to the massoretic form of the book of Esther, which is also very discreet about divine intervention.⁴⁸ Finally, Joseph and Pharaoh have no theological problems when speaking about God. In Gen 41:25–45, Joseph interprets the

ra: la historia de José (Gn 37–50) y sus relecturas en la literatura bíblica y parabíblica (Biblioteca midrásica 29; Estella: Verbo Divino, 2006); M. FIEGER and S. HODEL-HOENES, *Der Einzug in Ägypten. Ein Beitrag zur alttestamentlichen Josefsgeschichte* (ATiD 1; Bern *et al.*: Lang, 2007), 375–376; J. EBACH, *Genesis 37–50* (HThK.AT; Freiburg i.B. – Basel / Wien: Herder, 2007), 693; LISEWSKI, *Studien* (see n. 10), 455; D. NOCQUET, "L'Égypte, une autre terre de salut? Une lecture de Gn 45,1–46,7," *ETR* 84 (2009), 461–480; H.C.P. KIM, "Reading the Joseph Story (Genesis 37–50) as a Diaspora Narrative," *CBQ* 75 (2013), 219–238.

⁴³ S. RAMOND, *Les leçons et les énigmes du passé: une exégèse intra-biblique des psaumes historiques* (BZAW 459; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), 154–159. Ps 81:4–5 mentions Joseph in parallel to Israel, so that the announcement of liberation is not related to the Joseph narrative but to salvation from oppression in Egypt.

⁴⁴ See for instance DONNER, *Gestalt* (see n. 6), 13, n. 16; KEBEKUS, *Joseferzählung* (see n. 10), 150–151.

⁴⁵ REDFORD, *Study* (see n. 8); see similarly FIEGER and HODEL-HOENES, *Einzug* (see n. 42), and B.U. SCHIPPER, "Gn 41:42 and the Egyptian Background to the Investiture of Joseph," *RB* 118 (2011), 331–338.

⁴⁶ A. MEINHOLD, "Die Geschichte des Sinuhe und die alttestamentliche Diasporanovelle," *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der E.-M. Universität Greifswald* (1971), 277–288.

⁴⁷ If one accepts the hypothesis that Gen 39* did not belong to the original Joseph story.

⁴⁸ There is a major difference with the story of David's ascension to the throne in which the narrator insets comments that "Yhwh was with David" (comparable to Gen 39).

king's dreams by stating that "God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do" (v. 25), and Pharaoh answers to Joseph that "God has shown you this" (v. 39).

In the Hebrew Bible, the closest parallel to the idea that an Egyptian king shares the same belief in "elohim" as the Israelites is found in the Chronic account of Josiah's death in 2 Chr 35. In contrast to the version of 2 Kgs 23 2 Chr 35 shows that the Pharaoh warned Josiah and that the Egyptian king was invested with a divine mission:

"But Neco sent envoys to him [= Josiah], saying, 'What have I to do with you, king of Judah? I am not coming against you today, but against the house with which I am at war; and God ('elohim) has commanded me to hurry. Cease opposing God, who is with me, so that he will not destroy you' (v. 21)."

This idea of a "universal" god⁴⁹ is very close to the theology of the Joseph narrative.

The theology of the Joseph story can be labeled as "anti-deuteronomistic": mixed marriages are accepted, so are contacts with "pagan" religions and integration into the Egyptian culture. In contrast to the book of Esther, there is no emphasis on the danger that can occur in a diaspora situation, although there are some hints about the fact that integration cannot or should not be complete. One sees it, for example, in the fact that Joseph's family is settled in the land of Goshen⁵⁰, separated from the Egyptians, and maybe also in the note of 43:32:

"They served him by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because the Egyptians could not eat with the Hebrews, for that is an abomination to the Egyptians".

This note has sometimes be compared to Herodotus' information about the segregation of the Egyptians from the Greeks:

"This is the reason why no native of Egypt, whether man or woman, will give a Greek a kiss, or use the knife of a Greek, or his spit, or his cauldron, or taste the flesh of an ox, known to be pure, if it has been cut with a Greek knife." (Histories II,41)⁵¹.

Does this note, and the text of the Joseph story reflect Egyptian xenophobia⁵² or even the beginning of some anti-Judean resentments in Egypt⁵³? The same

⁴⁹ The idea may build on the priestly concept of a threefold divine revelation, according to which 'elohim is the name of God which can be used by all people of the earth; cf. A. DE PURY, "Gottesname, Gottesbezeichnung und Gottesbegriff. 'Elohim als Indiz zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Pentateuch," in *Abschied vom Jahwisten. Die Komposition des Hexateuch in der jüngsten Diskussion* (ed. J.C. Gertz, et al.; BZAW 315; Berlin / New York: de Gruyter, 2002), 25–47.

⁵⁰ T. RÖMER, "Goshen," *EBR* 10 (2015), cols 671–672.

⁵¹ Translation: G. RAWLINSON in <http://classics.mit.edu/Herodotus/history.2.ii.html> (last consulted 2015/06/04).

expression, “abomination (*to ‘eba*) for the Egyptians”, appears in the Hebrew Bible again, in Gen 46:34 and Exod 8:22. In both cases, the Hebrews use it in order to separate themselves from the Egyptians⁵⁴. These verses may therefore reflect the fact that integration in another culture has its limits⁵⁵.

If the Joseph narrative is to be understood as a “Diaspora novella”⁵⁶ then one must ask why the hero “Joseph” is a character from the North⁵⁷. First of all, the author of the Joseph story knows the Jacob story, which includes the birth of his sons. According to this story, Joseph and Benjamin are the (only) sons of Rachel, Jacob’s favorite wife. It is therefore quite logical for the author of the Joseph story to choose these two sons in order to construct his plot about the problem of preferred sons in a family. Second, the Northern character of Joseph could also be explained by the hypothesis that the Joseph story was perhaps composed in Elephantine⁵⁸, a colony which may have Northern origins⁵⁹. Finally, the Northern Joseph who reconciles with his “Southern” brothers, especially Judah, also fits very well with one of the major themes of the narrative, the reconciliation between brothers⁶⁰. Under-scoring this theme, we can detect a “pan-israelite” ideology corresponding to post-exilic prophetic texts, which announce a restoration of “Joseph” and “Judah” (Ezek 37:19; Zech 10:6). The figure of Joseph makes perfect sense in the context of a Diaspora novella.

⁵² REDFORD, *Study* (see n. 8), 235, evokes racial tensions in the Saite and Persian period. See also the discussion in T. RÖMER, “Deux repas ‘en miroir’ dans l’histoire de Joseph (Gn 37–50),” in *Fête, repas, identité. Hommage à Alfred Marx à l’occasion de son 70e anniversaire* (ed. C. Grappe; *RHPPhR* 93; Strasbourg: Université de Strasbourg, 2013), 15–27, 22–24.

⁵³ J. YOYOTTE, “L’Egypte ancienne et les origines de l’antijudaïsme,” *RHR* 163 (1963), 133–143.

⁵⁴ EBACH, *Genesis 37–50* (see n. 42), 472–473. For a somewhat different interpretation see A. PINKER, “Abomination to Egyptians’ in Genesis 43:32, 46:34, and Exodus 8:22,” *OTE* 22 (2009), 151–174.

⁵⁵ C. LEVIN, *Der Jahwist* (FRLANT 157; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 297.

⁵⁶ So also B. SCHIPPER, in a paper given at the University of Lausanne, April 22nd, 2015 (to be published), where he pointed out also the parallels between Ahiqar and the Joseph narrative.

⁵⁷ SCHMID, “Josephserzählung” (see n. 16), 110.

⁵⁸ FIEGER and HODEL-HOENES, *Einzug* (see n. 42), 373–375.

⁵⁹ K. VAN DER TOORN, “Anat-Yahu, Some Other Deities, and the Jews of Elephantine,” *Numen* 39 (1992), 80–101.

⁶⁰ See FISCHER, “Versöhnung” (see n. 15) and also WEIMAR, “Versöhnung” (see n. 29).

The Joseph narrative and the “priestly texts” in Gen 37–Exod 1

Most commentators agree that the Joseph narrative was not conceived as a link between the Patriarchal and the Exodus narrative. It has often been observed that, at the beginning of the Joseph story, Joseph’s mother is still alive (37:10) whereas Gen 35:16–21 reports her death. Verses 50:24–25 that create a transition with the following books are late redactional insertions. 50:26 clearly sounds like the conclusion of an independent story.

When, then, has the Joseph story been integrated into its present context? Here, those scholars who accept an independent P-document assert that P already knew the Joseph story, whereas those who think of a priestly redaction are inclined to attribute the insertion of the Joseph narrative to P. Indeed, there seems to be a major agreement that the Joseph story is older than the “priestly inserts” added to it⁶¹.

However, a closer analysis of the supposed P-texts in the Joseph story reveals a more complicated situation.

If we take those passages which are traditionally assigned to P (37:1–2a; 41:46a; 46:6–7⁶²; 47:27b–28; 48:3–6; 49.1a,28b–33; 50:12–13; Exod 1:1–5,7)⁶³ we obtain the following text (translation according to NRSV):

37:1–2*: Jacob settled in the land where his father had lived as an alien, the land of Canaan. 2a This is the story (*toledot*) of the family of Jacob. Joseph, [...], was shepherding the flock with his brothers; [...] ; and Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father.

41:46a: Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

46:6–7: They also took their livestock and the goods that they had acquired in the land of Canaan, and they came into Egypt, Jacob and all his offspring with him, his sons, and his sons’ sons with him, his daughters, and his sons’ daughters; all his offspring he brought with him into Egypt.

⁶¹ WEINGART, *Stämmevolk* (see n. 19), 247 with n. 383.

⁶² The list in 46 :8–27 is generally considered as P^a.

⁶³ This reconstruction is inspired by the synopsis of P.P. JENSON, *Graded Holiness. A Key to the Priestly Conception of the World* (JSOTSup 106; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 221–222, who compares the reconstruction of P by Noth, Elliger, Lohfink, Weimar and Holzinger. See similarly SCHMID, “Josephsgeschichte,” (see n. 16), 92, with more literature, and LUX, *Josef* (see n. 27), 150–151, who add especially 47:5–11*. A different approach is taken by L. SCHMIDT, “Die Priesterschrift in der Josefsgeschichte (Gen 37; 39–50),” in *Auf dem Weg zur Endgestalt von Genesis bis II Regum. Festschrift für Hans-Christoph Schmitt zu seinem 65. Geburtstag* (ed. M. Beck and U. Schorn; BZAW 370; Berlin / New York: de Gruyter, 2006), 111–123 and A. GRAUPNER, *Der Elohist : Gegenwart und Wirksamkeit des transzendenten Gottes in der Geschichte* (WMANT 97; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2002), 316–379, who add important passages in order to reconstruct a more or less coherent narration without any clear reasons why the passages should be attributed to P. This looks very much as a “Systemzwang”; see also the critical remarks of SCHMID, “Josephsgeschichte,” (see n. 16), 92, n. 54.

47:27b–28: They gained possessions in it, and were fruitful and multiplied exceedingly. 28 Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years; so the days of Jacob, the years of his life, were one hundred forty-seven years.

48:3–6 (7): 3 And Jacob said to Joseph, “God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and he blessed me, 4 and said to me, ‘I am going to make you fruitful and increase your numbers; I will make of you a company of peoples, and will give this land to your offspring after you for a perpetual holding.’ 5 Therefore your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are now mine; Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine, just as Reuben and Simeon are. 6 As for the offspring born to you after them, they shall be yours. They shall be recorded under the names of their brothers with regard to their inheritance. 7 For when I came from Paddan, Rachel, alas, died in the land of Canaan on the way, while there was still some distance to go to Ephrath; and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath” (that is, Bethlehem).

49:1a,28b–33: 1a Then Jacob called his sons, and said: Gather around. 28b He blessed them, one of them with a suitable blessing. 29 Then he charged them, saying to them, “I am about to be gathered to my people. Bury me with my ancestors – in the cave in the field of Ephron the Hittite, 30 in the cave in the field at Machpelah, near Mamre, in the land of Canaan, in the field that Abraham bought from Ephron the Hittite as a burial site. 31 There Abraham and his wife Sarah were buried; there Isaac and his wife Rebekah were buried; and there I buried Leah – 32 the field and the cave that is in it were purchased from the Hittites.” 33 When Jacob ended his charge to his sons, he drew up his feet into the bed, breathed his last, and was gathered to his people.

50:12–13: Thus his sons did for him as he had instructed them. They carried him to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave of the field at Machpelah, the field near Mamre, which Abraham bought as a burial site from Ephron the Hittite.

Exod 1:1–5,7,13: 1 These are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob, each with his household: 2 Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, 3 Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin, 4 Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. 5 The total number of people born to Jacob was seventy. Joseph was already in Egypt.

7 The Israelites were fruitful and prolific; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them.

13 The Egyptians became ruthless in imposing tasks on the Israelites, 14 and made their lives bitter with hard service in mortar and brick and in every kind of field labor. They were ruthless in all the tasks that they imposed on them.

This reconstruction does not offer a coherent narrative. Or, as Steinmann puts it: “L’histoire de Joseph est quasi réduite au néant”⁶⁴. According to Wöhrle, P took the whole pre-P Joseph story over, and limited himself to few additions like Gen 37:2*, 41:46a and 48:3–7⁶⁵.

⁶⁴ J. STEINMANN, *Code sacerdotal I: Genèse-Exode* (Connaître la Bible; Tournai: Desclée de Brouwer, 1962), 65. He then postulates that the priestly version of the Joseph story was left out by the final redacteur of the Pentateuch, but he does not indicate the reasons for such a cutting off.

⁶⁵ J. WÖHRLE, *Fremdlinge im eigenen Land: zur Entstehung und Intention der priesterlichen Passagen der Vätergeschichte* (FRLANT 246; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), 101–112.

However, this assumption creates a problem: why would P have acted in such a different way with the Joseph story, compared to the Abraham and Jacob narratives?

The best way to solve this dilemma is to say that there was neither a priestly narrative nor a priestly redaction of the Joseph story. One can demonstrate this fairly easily:

a) *The toledot title in 37:2 and the presentation of Joseph as a shepherd.* The *toledot*-titles, with the exception of Num 3:1 are limited to the book of Genesis. There is no good solution to the problem of how these titles are related to P⁶⁶. The mention of the *toledot* in Gen 37:2 does not necessarily need to be understood as an introduction to the Joseph story. It could have been the introduction to the list of Jacob's offspring in 46:8–19⁶⁷. The *toledot*-structure can also be understood as a post-priestly edition of the book of Genesis that aimed at emphasizing the “genealogical structure” of the book in contrast to the following books. In any case, the transition between this introduction and the note about Joseph's shepherding is far from being smooth. I cannot see good arguments for attributing the second part of Gen 37:2 to P. It transmits information that is not taken up in the following story and may have been inserted by a glossator, who wanted to add another reason for the hostility of Joseph's brothers towards Joseph. The indication in 37:2aß that Joseph was a shepherd, keeping the herd of his father, is a necessary introduction to the non-P story, which parallels Joseph with Moses and David.

b) *Joseph's age in 41:46a:* This note is traditionally attributed to P; yet the Joseph story contains two other indications of Joseph's age not often ascribed to P: the mention of him being 17 (37:2⁶⁸) and the indication of his age (110) at the moment of his death (attested twice in Egyptian sources as the maximum age for a wise man)⁶⁹. Thus, it seems more logical that the three indications of Joseph's age belong to the literary level that also structures Joseph's life in two parts (and thus not to P): from 17 to 30: the time of his youth, his separation from his family and the difficult start in Egypt; and from 30 to 110

⁶⁶ See the discussion in D. JERICKE, *Abraham in Mamre. Historische und exegetische Studien zur Region von Hebron und zu Genesis 11,27–19,38* (Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 17; Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2003), 134–142.

⁶⁷ This is suggested by JERICKE, *Abraham* (see n. 66), 140.

⁶⁸ According to Levin, *Jahwist* (see n. 55), 271 following Smend, a possible addition to P. In my view it belongs to the opening of the non-P Joseph narrative, as demonstrated by J. LANCKAU, *Der Herr der Träume: eine Studie zur Funktion des Traumes in der Josefsgeschichte der Hebräischen Bibel* (AThANT; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag 85, 2006), 135–136.

⁶⁹ LANCKAU, *Träume* (see n. 68), 137.

in Gen 50:22 and 26⁷⁰: the time of his career in Egypt and the reconciliation with his family. There are no convincing reasons to ascribe 41:46a to P⁷¹.

c) 46:6–7; 47:27b–28: *the descent of Jacob's family to Egypt*: these verses can be ascribed to P. They relate the installation of Jacob and his family in Egypt without mentioning Joseph. The note about Jacob's age at the end of his life has parallels in other P-texts, 25:7–8 (Abraham), 25:17 (Ishmael) and 35:28–29a (Isaac)⁷².

d) Gen 48:3–6(7): *Jacob's adoption of Ephraim and Manasseh*. These verses without a doubt contain priestly language and refer back to the priestly texts of the Patriarchal narratives, especially to Gen 17⁷³. However there are also words that do not occur in P, such as *naḥalâ* (v. 6), which is combined with the priestly *'aḥuzzâ* (v. 4). The author of v. 7 uses Paddan instead of the priestly Paddan-aram and refers to the non-P text 35:16–19. Therefore it seems more plausible to consider Gen 48:3–6(7) a post-priestly (Samaritan?) redaction, especially since it wants to make Ephraim and Manasseh the Northern "first-borns"⁷⁴.

e) 49:1a, 28b–33; 50:12–13 *Jacob's blessing, death and funeral*: these passages do not contain any mention of Joseph and may well belong to the priestly account of Jacob's end.

f) Exod 1:1–5, 7⁷⁵, 13: *The list of Jacob's son going down to Egypt. Multiplication and oppression*.

Some scholars consider the list in Exod 1:1–5 a post-P insertion, that provides a proper introduction to the scroll of Exodus⁷⁶. However, this view is

⁷⁰ Certainly not a P-text, cf. LANCKAU, *Träume* (see n. 68), 136.

⁷¹ As LANCKAU, *Träume* (see n. 68), 139, states: "Nicht jede Altersangabe ist automatisch als priesterschriftlich anzusehen".

⁷² LEVIN, *Jahwist* (see n. 55) 309–310. The 17 years of his life in Egypt remind of Joseph's age at the beginning of the Joseph narrative. It is difficult to know if the indication in 47:28 depends on 37:2 and constitutes a later insert into the P text.

⁷³ For details see WÖHRLE, *Fremdlinge* (see n. 65), 120–123.

⁷⁴ See also LEVIN, *Jahwist* (see n. 55), 311, who attributes the passage to a "nachredaktionelle Ergänzung". For the post-P character of these verses see also KRATZ, *Komposition* (see n. 21), 243, n. 23 and UEHLINGER, "Fratrîe" (see n. 42), 310.

⁷⁵ The mention of Joseph's death in v. 6 is later than Exod 1:1–5 and presupposes Gen 50:24–26. Exod 1:8 ("Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.") belongs to a Hexateuchal redaction that creates a parallel between the beginning of the time of the Exodus and the time of the Judges (Judg 2:10); see the detailed argumentation in J.C. GERTZ, *Tradition und Redaktion in der Exoduserzählung. Untersuchungen zur Endredaktion des Pentateuch* (FRLANT 186; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 358–363.

⁷⁶ G. FOHRER, *Überlieferung und Geschichte des Exodus: eine Analyse von Ex 1–15* (BZAW 91; Berlin: A. Töpelmann, 1964), 9; LEVIN, *Jahwist* (see n. 55), 315; GERTZ, *Tradition* (see n. 75), 353–357, who quotes more authors that adopt this position, 355, n. 25.

not compelling, because the list of Jacob's sons fits well in a P transition from the Patriarchs to the Exodus⁷⁷. However, the mention that Joseph was already in Egypt in v. 5 does not belong to the original list, in which he is mentioned in v. 3 just before Benjamin⁷⁸. Text-critical observations also support this hypothesis: the position of v. 5b, which looks indeed like an addition, was apparently not textually stable, since the LXX situates it in v. 4. A fragment from Qumran attests that Joseph belonged to the list since in v. 3 it mentions Joseph between Zebulun and Benjamin.

If we put together the passages we identified as P, it appears that a report about the descent of Jacob's family to Egypt without any mention or knowledge of Joseph's career in Egypt secures the priestly transition between the Patriarchs and the Exodus⁷⁹:

37:1: Jacob settled in the land where his father had lived as an alien, the land of Canaan.

46:6–7: They took their livestock and the goods that they had acquired in the land of Canaan, and they came into Egypt, Jacob and all his offspring with him, his sons, and his sons' sons with him, his daughters, and his sons' daughters; all his offspring he brought with him into Egypt. 47:27b–28: They gained possessions in it, and were fruitful and multiplied exceedingly. 28 Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years; so the days of Jacob, the years of his life, were one hundred forty-seven years.

49:1a,28b–33: 1a Then Jacob called his sons, and said: Gather around. 28b He blessed them, one of them with a suitable blessing. 29 Then he charged them, saying to them, "I am about to be gathered to my people. Bury me with my ancestors – in the cave in the field of Ephron the Hittite, 30 in the cave in the field at Machpelah, near Mamre, in the land of Canaan, in the field that Abraham bought from Ephron the Hittite as a burial site. 31 There Abraham and his wife Sarah were buried; there Isaac and his wife Rebekah were buried; and there I buried Leah – 32 the field and the cave that is in it were purchased from the Hittites." 33 When Jacob ended his charge to his sons, he drew up his feet into the bed, breathed his last, and was gathered to his people.

50:12–13: Thus his sons did for him as he had instructed them. They carried him to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave of the field at Machpelah, the field near Mamre, which Abraham bought as a burial site from Ephron the Hittite.

Exod 1:1–5a,7,13: 1 These are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob, each with his household: 2 Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, 3 Issachar, Zebulun, [Joseph] and Benjamin, 4 Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. 5a The total number of people born to Jacob was seventy.

7 The Israelites were fruitful and prolific; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them. 13 The Egyptians became ruthless in imposing tasks

⁷⁷ L. SCHMIDT, "Priesterschrift" (see n. 63), 122–123.

⁷⁸ W.H. SCHMIDT, *Exodus 1,1–6,30* (BKAT II/1; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1974), 26–28. He thinks however that P had integrated this list and transformed it.

⁷⁹ For a similar reconstruction see K. SCHMID, "The So-Called Yahwist and the Literary Gap between Genesis and Exodus," in *A Farewell to the Yahwist? The Composition of the Pentateuch in Recent European Interpretation* (ed. T.B. Dozeman and K. Schmid; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 29–50, 46–47.

on the Israelites, 14 and made their lives bitter with hard service in mortar and brick and in every kind of field labor. They were ruthless in all the tasks that they imposed on them.

The priestly passages talk about a descent of Jacob's family to Egypt, where the Israelites become fruitful and multiply. This transition matches the descent of Jacob (and his family) mentioned in Deut 26:5; Num 20:15; 1 Sam 12:8 or Ezek 20:5. In these texts, the settlement of the ancestors in Egypt is not related to a Joseph narrative. As Rendtorff puts it:

“One must then in all sobriety conclude that for the exegete who is not convinced *before-hand* that there must be a P-Joseph story, such does not exist“.⁸⁰

Our investigation has confirmed his statement. The priestly texts of the end of Genesis and the beginning of Exodus do not show an awareness of a Joseph narrative.

Conclusion

The Joseph narrative, now integrated into Gen 37–50, was originally an independent Diaspora novella composed during the Persian period, probably by a member of the Hebrews living in Egypt in order to legitimate a life outside the land. In contrast to the current idea that the original Joseph story must be older than P, our investigation has shown that this is not in fact the case. The Joseph narrative was inserted at the end of Genesis *after* the integration of the P-texts⁸¹, by redactors who wanted to construct a Hexa- or a Pentateuch and give some space also to a voice of the Diaspora. To end with Jean Louis Ska's statement quoted at the opening of our investigation, the hypothesis that the Joseph story is post-P represents the best solution, since it explains the largest amount of data.

⁸⁰ R. RENDTORFF, *The Problem of the Process of Transmission in the Pentateuch* (trans. J.J. Scullion; JSOTS 89; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 139.

⁸¹ Theoretically the Joseph narrative could have been written down earlier than the composition of P, and P would have ignored it. But if P is to date at the beginning of the Persian period, than it seems more logical that the Joseph narrative is younger than P.

