

# The Reception and Remembrance of Abraham

Edited by

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# ABRAHAM AND THE 'LAW AND THE PROPHETS'

THOMAS RÖMER

## INTRODUCTION: THE PATRIARCHS AND THE EXODUS

The Torah in its present form can be characterized as a biography of Moses<sup>1</sup> since the books of Exodus to Deuteronomy are framed by the birth of Moses (Exodus 2) and his death (Deuteronomy 34). The Patriarchal narratives appear in this regard as a prologue of a sort to the Moses narrative,<sup>2</sup> which includes almost all 'legal' material. Major themes of the Patriarchal narratives, such as land and offspring, function in this construction as preparing for the exodus and conquest account where both themes appear to be accomplished. But were the promises of land and progeny in Genesis always conceived as an introduction to the Moses- and Joshua stories? Intriguingly, the first time that Yhwh speaks to Moses about the land, which he will give to the Israelites, he does it in the following way: 'I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites' (Exod. 3:8). As often observed the land

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<sup>1</sup> R. P. Knierim, 'The Composition of the Pentateuch,' In *SBL Seminar Papers*, 24 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), 393-415.

<sup>2</sup> R. W. L. Moberly, *The Old Testament of the Old Testament. Overtures to Biblical Theology*. (Philadelphia: Augsburg/Fortress, 1992) considers the book of Genesis as the 'Old Testament' of the Torah.

is introduced here to Moses as if it were totally unknown: 'there is not a word which mentions that the patriarchs have already lived a long time in this land and that God has promised it to them and their descendants as a permanent possession. Following the terminology of the land in Genesis, those addressed here would be the 'seed' for which the promise holds good. But they are not spoken to as such.'<sup>3</sup> In fact the original account of Moses' call does not seem to know the patriarchal tradition and was apparently conceived as opening an independent Moses story.<sup>4</sup>

This means that the tradition of the Patriarchs and the Exodus tradition were linked only at a late stage. They arose as independent or even competing origin myths presenting two different pictures of Israel's beginnings. The Patriarchal narratives in the book of Genesis focus on genealogical identity and integrate Israel's neighbors such as the Edomites, the Moabites, the Ammonites and the Arabic tribes into a family system,<sup>5</sup> whereas the Moses tradition is not interested in genealogies, but draws a picture of a hostile autochthonous population, which must be driven out of the land.

The discovery of the diversity (regarding the process of transmission and ideology) concerning the patriarchal and exodus traditions in recent research is not an absolute novelty. The tradition-historical independence of the patriarchal and exodus

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<sup>3</sup> R. Rendtorff, *The Problem of the Process of Transmission in the Pentateuch* (JSOTSup, 89; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990 [German original 1976]), 128.

<sup>4</sup> There is quite an agreement that the identification of the 'god of the fathers' with the 'god of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob' belongs to the latest redactional layers of Exod 3–4, see for instance: P. Weimar, *Die Berufung des Mose: Literaturwissenschaftliche Analyse von Exodus 2,23–5,5* (OBO, 32; Freiburg CH–Göttingen: Universitätsverlag–Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980), and T. Römer, 'Exodus 3–4 und die aktuelle Pentateuchdiskussion,' in R. Roukema (ed.), *The Interpretation of Exodus. Studies in Honour of Cornelis Houtman* (CBET, 44; Leuven–Paris–Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2006), 65–79.

<sup>5</sup> F. Crüsemann, 'Human Solidarity and Ethnic Identity: Israel's Self-Definition in the Genealogical System of Genesis,' in M. G. Brett (ed.), *Ethnicity and the Bible* (BIS, 19; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 57–76.

traditions had already been emphasized by Staerk, Galling and other scholars at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, yet the combination of these traditions was located at a very early stage at the time of the early monarchy in Israel.<sup>6</sup> In recent discussion the question has come to be whether this link was created for the first time by the Priestly author or redactor (Römer, Schmid, Blum and others<sup>7</sup>) or whether this was due to an exilic Yahwistic author or redactor (Van Seters, Levin and others<sup>8</sup>). The question may remain open here. There is quite a wide agreement that on the literary level both traditions were not combined before the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E.

As for the Patriarchal narratives one has, of course, to differentiate between the Jacob and the Abraham traditions. Whereas the Jacob legend may belong to the oldest traditions preserved in the Hebrew Bible,<sup>9</sup> the first Abraham stories originated probably during the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E.<sup>10</sup> Interestingly in the oldest stories like

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<sup>6</sup> W. Staerk, *Studien zur Religions- und Sprachgeschichte des alten Testaments, I. und II. Heft* (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1899); K. Galling, *Die Erwählungstraditionen Israels* (BZAW, 48. Giessen: Alfred Töpelmann, 1928).

<sup>7</sup> T. Römer, *Israels Väter. Untersuchungen zur Väterthematik im Deuteronomium und in der deuteronomistischen Tradition* (OBO, 99; Freiburg CH-Göttingen: Universitätsverlag: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990), 574; K. Schmid, *Genesis and the Moses Story. Israel's Dual Origins in the Hebrew Bible* (Siphrut, 3; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2010 [German original 1999]); E. Blum, 'The Literary Connection Between the Books of Genesis and Exodus and the End of the Book of Joshua,' in T. B. Dozeman and K. Schmid (eds.), *A Farewell to the Yahwist? The Composition of the Pentateuch in Recent European Interpretation* (SBL Symposium Series, 34; Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 89–106.

<sup>8</sup> J. Van Seters, 'The Patriarchs and the Exodus: Bridging the Gap Between Two Origin Traditions,' in *The Interpretation of Exodus 1–15* (2006); C. Levin, 'The Yahwist and the Redactional Link Between Genesis and Exodus,' in *A Farewell to the Yahwist?* (2006), 131–41. See also, somewhat differently R. G. Kratz, *The Composition of the Narrative Books of the Old Testament* (London–New York: T&T Clark–Continuum, 2005 [German original 2000]).

<sup>9</sup> A. de Pury, 'The Jacob Story and the Beginning of the Formation of the Pentateuch,' in *A Farewell to the Yahwist?* (2006), 51–72.

<sup>10</sup> J. Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition* (New Haven–London: Yale University Press, 1975); I. Fischer, *Die Erzelter Israel. Femi-*

Gen. 12:10–20 and Genesis 16 there are allusions to the Exodus, but in a quite ironical or polemical way. The authors of these texts apparently knew the Exodus tradition, but did not really agree with its ideology.

### REVERSAL OF THE EXODUS IDEOLOGY IN GEN. 12:10–20 AND GENESIS 16<sup>11</sup>

Gen. 12:10–20 relates like the Joseph story a descent to Egypt because of famine. When withdrawing from Canaan Abraham acts on his own initiative. He imagines the Egyptians as eager to commit murder (12:12) thus adopting the same attitude as the narrator of the exodus story (cf. Exod. 2:15: Pharaoh seeks to kill Moses; in Exod. 5:21, the Hebrews are afraid that Pharaoh will kill them). Yet according to Gen. 12:16, Pharaoh acts generously towards Abraham, paying him a large bridal price for his wife whom he had presented as his sister. Another allusion to the exodus story presents itself in the afflictions by which Yhwh strikes Egypt (Gen. 12:11), a leitmotif of the plagues narrative. Unlike the pharaoh of the exodus story, the king of the Egyptians in Gen. 12 reacts immediately to the divine intervention; while the pharaoh of the exodus narrative is reluctant to release Israel from his service (*š-l-h*, pi.), in Gen. 12:20 the king of Egypt sends Abram, together with his wife and belongings, back to Palestine (*š-l-h*, pi.). Likewise, the charge to Abram in Gen. 12:19 corresponds to the one spoken to the people in the exodus narrative in Exod. 12:32. Hence it seems plausible that the episode in Gen. 12:10–20 was composed with knowledge of the exodus narrative (in which form, however?). But the roles have been changed. Contrary to the exodus narrative, Abram, representing Israel, plays a rather dubious part, while the pharaoh is endowed with positive features.

The same holds true for the characters of Sarah and Hagar in Gen. 16.<sup>12</sup> Here, Hagar is introduced in Genesis 16 as an Egyptian

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*nistisch-theologische Studien zu Genesis 12–36* (BZAW, 222; Berlin–New York: de Gruyter, 1994); M. Köckert, 'Die Geschichte der Abraham-überlieferung,' in A. Lemaire (ed.), *Congress Volume Leiden 2004* (VTS, 109; Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2006), 103–28.

<sup>11</sup> For more details see T. Römer, 'The Exodus in the Book of Genesis,' *Svensk Evangelisk Årsbok* 75 (2010), 1–20.

slave.<sup>13</sup> In addition to serving as a reference back to Genesis. 12, Hagar's Egyptian nationality works to reverse the exodus tradition: Hagar, the Egyptian, is oppressed by her Hebrew mistress. The root ענה appearing in Gen. 16:6 is used in the following books of the Pentateuch to describe Israel's oppression in Egypt (Exod. 1:11–12; Deut. 26:6, see also Gen. 15:13). Just as Israel flees (ברח, Exod. 14:5) from Egypt, so does Hagar from her oppressor (ברח, Gen. 16:6). It is therefore Hagar who prefigures Israel's fate, while Sarah plays a role comparable to that of the Egyptian oppressors. Like Moses, Hagar encounters a divine messenger in the desert, mediating on both occasions a message of liberation: to Moses, a promise of liberation from Egyptian slavery; to Hagar a promise of Ishmael's living free. The substantive עני appears in both instances: Exod. 3:7: 'I have surely seen the affliction of my people'; Gen. 16:11: 'Yhwh has listened to your affliction.'

To sum up, Gen. 12:10–20 and 16 consciously operate with polemic and ironic allusions to the exodus tradition. Consequently, it seems possible to presume that by the time of their composition, the exodus tradition and the patriarchal tradition were still in a certain tension.

However, there is in the Abraham narrative at least one text seeking to harmonize the patriarchal tradition with that of the exodus, wilderness and occupation of the land traditions, and even to present Abraham as summarizing the 'Law (Moses) and the Prophets'.

### GENESIS 15 IN THE CONTEXT OF THE REDACTION OF THE PENTATEUCH

As already mentioned, Moses is the main human figure of the Torah, the mediator par excellence between Yhwh and Israel. The main protagonists of the promulgation of the Pentateuch agreed on his central role and concluded the Torah by an epitaph that underlines Moses' incomparability: 'Never since has there arisen a

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<sup>12</sup> Both stories are very closely related as shown by J. Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition*.

<sup>13</sup> For the Exodus and wilderness motifs in Gen 16 see also T. B. Dozeman, 'The Wilderness and Salvation History in the Hagar Story,' *JBL* 117 (1998), 23–43.

prophet in Israel like Moses, whom Yhwh knew face to face. He was unequalled for all the signs and wonders that Yhwh sent him to perform in the land of Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his servants and his entire land, and for all the mighty deeds and all the terrifying displays of power that Moses performed in the sight of all Israel' (Deut. 34:10). This text clearly marks a break between the Torah and the following books. There may be other prophets to come, but none of them compares to Moses. This praise of Moses is somewhat counterbalanced by the portrait of Abraham in Genesis 15, a text that belongs in my view to the latest texts that were added to the Abraham narratives.

### THE FORMATION OF GENESIS 15

There is some consensus again in recent European research that Genesis 15 is a 'late' text, but opinions differ in regard to the question whether it is basically the work of one author or the result of a complex history of redactions and whether it pre- or postdates the priestly account of Yhwh's covenant with Abraham in Genesis 17. Those scholars who postulate a pre-priestly origin of Genesis 15<sup>14</sup> need to affirm that Yhwh's prediction in v.13–16 are a late insertion since the announcement of Abraham's death in peace presupposes the priestly account of his passing away in Gen. 25:8.<sup>15</sup> One may argue that verses 13–16 interrupt the narrative link between v. 12 (the sun is about to go down: (וַיְהִי הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לָבוֹא)) and v. 17 (the sun has gone down: (וַיְהִי הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ בָּאָרָה))<sup>16</sup>. One may add, that v. 13–16 promise a return of the exodus generation into the land

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<sup>14</sup> See for the following arguments among others E. Blum, *Die Komposition der Vätergeschichte* (WMANT, 57; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1984), 379–80 and J.-L. Ska, 'Some Groundwork on Genesis 15,' in *The Exegesis of the Pentateuch. Exegetical Studies and Basic Questions* (FAT, 66; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 67–81. Note however that Blum has changed his mind and considers now Gen 15 as a post-priestly composition, see E. Blum, 'Die literarische Verbindung von Erzvätern und Exodus. Ein Gespräch mit neueren Forschungshypothesen,' in *Abschied vom Jahwisten* (2002), 119–56, 140–1.

<sup>15</sup> One may add that the 400-years time span presupposes Exod 12:40 (P) and the mention of Ur Casdim Gen 11:28.31 (also P).

<sup>16</sup> This may be considered as a typical case of a *Wiederaufnahme*, which indicates in many cases redactional activity.



whereas in v. 18 God gives the land to Abraham's offspring. But both arguments are not compelling: If Genesis 15 is to be considered as a text that reflect the promulgation of the Pentateuch or a Hexateuch we could understand the different conception of the possession of the land in v. 13–16 and 18 as an attempt to harmonize the different land conceptions of the Patriarchal and the Exodus traditions. Without, the verses 13–16 the mention of the birds of prey in v. 11 is a blind motif of sorts<sup>17</sup> since those birds are probably related to the announcement of a bad or difficult omen.<sup>18</sup> Finally without verse 13 'Know for certain', Abraham's question of v. 8 'how am I to know?' would remain without response. Consequently, there is no need to extract v. 13–16 from the original account, which would then appear as a post-priestly composition.

Some authors also argue that v. 2–6 and 7–18\* are doublets and that only one of the divine speeches to Abraham belongs to the original text.<sup>19</sup> There is however no contradiction between 15:5 (Abraham contemplates [during the night?] the stars in the heaven) and 15:12 (where the sun is about to go down) if one considers that the whole encounter between Yhwh and Abraham takes place in the context of a vision (v. 1).<sup>20</sup> More generally, it is difficult to

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<sup>17</sup> In a way it is logical that J. C. Gertz, 'Abraham, Mose und der Exodus. Beobachtungen zur Redaktionsgeschichte von Genesis 15,' in J. C. Gertz, et al. (eds.), *Abschied vom Jahwisten. Die Komposition des Hexateuch in der jüngsten Diskussion* (BZAW, 315; ed. Berlin–New York: de Gruyter, 2002), 63–81 eliminates v. 11 together with v. 13–16 from the original text. But this is circular reasoning.

<sup>18</sup> See Virgil, *Aeneid*, 3, 225–230. There is also a Hittite text that mentions a ritual of cutting a dog into two pieces when seeing a bird of bad omen: O. Masson, 'A propos d'un rituel hittite pour la lustration d'une armée: le rite de purification par le passage entre les deux parties de la victime,' *RHR* 137 (1950), 5–25.

<sup>19</sup> According to C. Levin, 'Jahwe und Abraham im Dialog: Genesis 15,' in M. Witte (ed.), *Gott und Mensch im Dialog. Festschrift für Otto Kaiser zum 80. Geburtstag* (BZAW, 345; Berlin–New York: de Gruyter, 2004), 237–57, only 15:1,3\* and 4 belong to the original text, whereas L. Schmidt, 'Genesis xv,' *VT* 56 ((2006), 251–67 reconstructs the oldest account in 15:7–11.17–18. Both authors agree that the first edition of Gen 15 is later than P.

<sup>20</sup> S. B. Noegel, 'A Crux and a Taunt: Night-Time then Sunset in Genesis 15,' in P. R. Davies and D. J. A. Clines (eds.), *The World of Genesis*.

consider v. 1–6 and 7–19 as doublets. Rendtorff has convincingly shown how both parts are related: the question of the descendant leads to the affirmation of an uncountable offspring, and for that offspring God announces the gift of the land (see the play on the root  $\gamma-r-\delta$ ).<sup>21</sup>

The list of the nations in v. 19–21 is very often characterized as an addition. It is true that there is no clear grammatical link between these verses and the foregoing gift of the land. However, the indicators of the accusative in these verses take up the  $\text{את הארץ}$  from v. 18 so that the whole list appears as apposition to the land. If the list were the addition of a late glossator one wonders why he composed an enumeration of ten names, whereas all others of these listings contain six or seven members. Therefore I see no convincing reason to extract Gen. 15:19–21 from the original account.

With the exception of some glosses in verses 2–3,<sup>22</sup> Genesis 15 should be understood as the work of one author writing in the Persian era, at a time, when the Torah was about to be officially published. The late date of Gen. 15 is also confirmed by the fact that this chapter clearly presupposes Genesis 14,<sup>23</sup> which is almost

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*Persons, Places, Perspectives* (JSOTSup, 257; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 128–35.

<sup>21</sup> R. Rendtorff, 'Genesis 15 im Rahmen der theologischen Bearbeitung der Vätergeschichte,' in R. Albertz et al. (eds.), *Werden und Wirken des Alten Testaments (FS C. Westermann)* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1980), 74–81.

<sup>22</sup> There is much discussion about these verses. In my view the most elegant solution is the one suggested by H. Seebass, *Genesis II. Vätergeschichte I (11,27–22,24)* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1997), 69: V. 2a and 3b represent the original text: 'Abram said, "My Lord Yhwh, what will you give me, for I will pass childless and so somebody born in my house is to be my heir."' To this a glossator added the identification of Eliezer in v. 2b and 3s was added in order to smooth the transition after the insert of v. 2b.

<sup>23</sup> This is rightly observed by J. Gertz, 'Abraham, Mose und der Exodus'. In order to be able to postulate that the first edition of Gen 15 is older than Gen 14, Gertz is forced to eliminate verse 1, which clearly alludes to Gen 14. This is a somewhat circular argumentation.

unanimously considered as a late text.<sup>24</sup> The theme of the shield and the booty in 15:1 only makes sense if Genesis 14 is known.

Therefore the best hypothesis is to consider Genesis 15 as a whole as the latest text that has been inserted into the Abraham narrative in order to present Israel's first patriarch as almost as important as Moses.

### GENESIS 15 AS SUMMARY OF THE TORAH

Genesis 15 resembles in some respects Joshua 24, which provides at the end of the narrative (which encompasses the time of the patriarchs to the conquest of the land) a final summary of the Hexateuch.<sup>25</sup> Genesis 15, at the beginning of Israel's history offers equally a 'table of contents' of the Penta- or even Hexateuch.<sup>26</sup>

In v. 7, God introduces himself to Abram as 'Yhwh who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans'. This opening is reminiscent of the beginning of the Decalogue:<sup>27</sup> 'I am Yhwh ..., who brought you out of the land of Egypt' (Exod. 20:2). Accordingly, Yhwh introduces himself to Abraham as an 'exodical' God early on. On the other hand, this presentation returns to the beginning of the Abraham cycle (11:27–12:5) by modifying it. According to this opening, it is Abram's father Terah who takes the initiative to leave Ur with his family in order to settle down in Harran. According to 12:1–4, Abram receives the divine call in Harran (see 11:31). Gen. 15:7 antedates the relation between Abraham and Yhwh into its very beginnings in Ur. In this regard Gen. 15:7 parallels Josh. 24:3: 'Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River,' and Neh. 9:7: 'You are Yhwh, the God who chose Ab-

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<sup>24</sup> See for instance J. A. Emerton, 'Some False Clues in the Study of Genesis xiv,' *VT* 21 (1971), 24–47; J. Van Seters, *Abraham*, 305; V. Glissmann, 'Genesis 14: A Diaspora Novella?' *JOT* 34 (2009), 34–45.

<sup>25</sup> See for more details T. Römer, 'Das doppelte Ende des Josuabuches: einige Anmerkungen zur aktuellen Diskussion um "deuteronomistisches Geschichtswerk" und "Hexateuch",' *ZAW* 118 (2006), 523–48.

<sup>26</sup> T. Römer, 'Gen 15 und Gen 17. Beobachtungen und Anfragen zu einem Dogma der "neueren" und "neuesten" Pentateuchkritik,' *DBAT* 26 (1990), 32–47.

<sup>27</sup> Further allusions to the Decalogue can be found in the 'fourth generation' and the 'iniquity' [of the Amorite], v. 16.

ram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans'. It is possible that both texts presuppose a negative tradition about Abraham's father who remains in Babylonia.<sup>28</sup> The author of Gen. 15:7 wants to make Israel's history to start with Abraham, not with his father.

In the second part of the text, Abraham receives knowledge about exodus and return. Just like Moses who is informed of God's future actions during his call (Exod. 3:17–22), Abram obtains here a summary of the exodus story. Contrarily to Gen. 12:10–20 and Genesis 16 the evocation of the Exodus does not serve polemical purposes, it is presented to Abraham as information about the events to come before the promise of the land can be realized. The double chronological indication in v. 13 (enslavement for 400 years) and v. 16 (return at the fourth generation) has often puzzled commentators. The fourth generation in v. 16 is certainly an interpretation of the Decalogue according to which Yhwh punishes the faults of the fathers up to the fourth generation (Exod. 20:5; Deut. 5:9; see also Exod. 34:7). The 400 years recall the priestly indication of 430 years in Exod. 12:40. The reduction to 400 years in Genesis 15 may be explained as a midrashic strategy. According to Genesis 21 (P) Abraham is 100 years old when Isaac, the next generation, is born, so that 400 may well denote 4 hundred-years generations.<sup>29</sup>

There are also allusions to the Sinai theophany, like the smoke and the fire in v. 17 (see Exod. 19:18<sup>30</sup>). The conclusion of the covenant with Abram recorded at the end of the passage does not establish any specific *berît* with the patriarch (as this is the case in Genesis 17), since (Gen. 15:18 excepted) the expression *ברית ברית* is exclusively used in respect of the Horeb/Sinai covenant. That is

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<sup>28</sup> This tradition appears explicitly in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE book of the Jubilees (chapter 12) where Abraham destroys the idols of his father.

<sup>29</sup> Another explanation would be the following. The 400 years refer to the length of the sojourn in Egypt. The four generations comprise the generation involved in the Exodus, which starts with the birth of Moses. Since Moses is 120 years old when he dies, his life comprises according to Numbers 14 (a generation = 40 years) three generations, and the following one enters the land.

<sup>30</sup> The mention of the furnace may also allude to Isa. 31:9: 'oracle of Yhwh, whose fire is in Zion, and whose furnace is in Jerusalem'. In that case the author, presupposing that Abram is still in Salem (according to Gen 14) inserts a discrete allusion to Jerusalem.

to say, Genesis 15 anticipates the Sinaitic covenant. Finally, the promise of a land, which reaches from the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, may allude to such descriptions in Deuteronomy (11:24) and Joshua (1:4) and elsewhere in the Bible. In connection with Isa. 27:12 and 2 Kgs. 24:7, Gen. 15:18 may be understood as a way to make the whole Persian province of Transeuphratene the territory where Jews can live: that means there is no difference between living in Yehud, Samaria or the Diaspora: the whole Persian empire can be the homeland for Abraham's offspring.

Genesis 15 not only summarizes the main themes of the Penta- or Hexateuch, it also presents Abraham as a forerunner of Moses, but also as Israel's 'first prophet' and 'first king'.

### ABRAHAM, THE FIRST KING

Genesis 15 opens by presenting Abraham as a royal figure. Yhwh promises him important booty and presents himself as Abram's shield. The root *m-g-n* can be found in the whole Pentateuch only here, in Gen. 14:20 and in Deut. 33:29, a verse that contains Moses' last words before his death. Yhwh's promise to Abram is fulfilled in his intervention for a 'royal' Israel: 'Happy are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by Yhwh, the shield of your help, and the sword of your triumph! Your enemies shall submit themselves to you; and you shall tread upon their high places.' Abram's royal figure is reinforced by the divine exhortation: 'do not be afraid', which parallels Assyrian and Babylonian *Heilsorakel* given to the king.

It has often been observed that Abraham is also presented as an anti-Ahab. The emphasis on his faith (v. 6) is the opposite of king Ahaz, whom the prophet Isaiah accuses of lacking faith (Isa. 7:9). But he is also the 'first David'.<sup>31</sup> Yhwh's unconditional promise to Abraham anticipates his conditional promise to David in 2 Samuel 7.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> B. Gosse, 'Abraham and David,' *JOT* 34 (2009), 25–31.

<sup>32</sup> Besides 2 Sam 6.11, Gen 15 and 2 Sam 7 are the only biblical texts that speak about a son coming out of his father's entrails.

Gen. 15:4	The one who shall come forth out of your entrails (יֵצֵא אֲשֶׁר מִמְעֵיךָ) shall be your heir
2 Sam. 7:12	I will set up your seed after you, that shall come forth out of your entrails (אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא מִמְעֵיךָ)

The transfer of royal ideology to Abraham, which occurs also in Gen. 12:1-4<sup>33</sup> and in Genesis 17<sup>34</sup>, probably reflects a democratization of a sort of royal ideology. The Torah agrees with the idea that Israel does not need a king since it has Moses, but it also has Abraham.

### ABRAHAM, THE FIRST PROPHET

In Deuteronomy 18 Moses seems to inaugurate the prophetic office in Israel, since the text states that Yhwh will raise from henceforth other prophets like Moses (18:15).<sup>35</sup> In Genesis 20, which according to Blum and others is the latest of the three versions of the narrative of the Patriarch presenting his wife as his sister,<sup>36</sup> Abraham is called a prophet and intercedes for Abimelech (v. 7 and 17), so that God may heal him from his illness (sterility or impotence?). Thus, in the context of the Torah, Genesis 20 makes Abraham the first prophet and not Moses. Whereas Moses intercedes in Exodus 32 and Numbers 14 for his own people, Abraham prays in Genesis 20 for a foreign king, who symbolizes a God-fearing pagan. The idea that Abraham and not Moses is Israel's first prophet occurs also in Genesis 15.

The story opens indeed with a prophetic formula: *הָיָה דְבַר-יְהוָה אֶל-אַבְרָם* 'Yhwh's word came to Abram.' This *Wortereig-*

<sup>33</sup> J.-L. Ska, 'The Call of Abraham and Israel's Birth-certificate (Gen 12:1-4a),' in *The Exegesis of the Pentateuch* (FAT, 66; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 46-66, 62-3.

<sup>34</sup> In Gen 17 Abram receives a new name like a king when he is enthroned. He also becomes the 'father' of all coming kings (v. 19).

<sup>35</sup> C. Nihan, "'Un prophète comme Moïse" (Deutéronome 18,15): Genèse et relectures d'une construction deutéronomiste,' in T. Römer (ed.), *La construction de la figure de Moïse—The Construction of the Figure of Moses* (Transeuphratène Suppl., 13; Paris: Gabalda, 2007), 43-88.

<sup>36</sup> E. Blum, *Die Komposition der Vätergeschichte* (WMANT, 57; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1984), 405-11; A. Leveen, 'Reading the Seams,' *JOT* 29 (2005), 259-87.

*nisformel* parallels Abraham with the prophets, especially Ezekiel (Ez. 1:3) and Jeremiah, where this formula occurs constantly. The prophetic context is underlined by the fact that the divine word is accompanied by a vision (see for instance Jeremiah 1). The fact that Yhwh informs Abram about his plans can also be understood from the background of Amos: 'Certainly the Lord Yhwh does nothing without first revealing his plan to his servants the prophets' (Amos 3:7; Gen. 18:17 probably also alludes to this text).

Genesis 15 and 20 (perhaps also 18:17) construct, contrary to Deuteronomy 18, Abraham as the first of Yhwh's prophets. In reaction to the attempt to present Abraham as the first prophet, some passages in the Pentateuch try to show that Moses is, in contrast to the assertion of Deuteronomy 18, more than a prophet (see for instance Exod. 7:1 and Numb. 12:6–8). Finally Moses appears as an incomparable mediator in the epitaph of Deut. 34:10–12, which also distinguishes him from all the other prophets: 'Never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom Yhwh knew face to face ...' Therefore, in the context of the Torah, Moses is no longer Israel's first prophet, but more than a prophet, Israel's incomparable mediator. Some passages in Genesis 15 however, try to show that Abraham comes very close to Moses in presenting him as his direct predecessor.

### **ABRAHAM, THE 'FIRST MOSES'**

We have already underlined how the author of Genesis 15 links exodus events with Abraham. Moreover he modifies the priestly idea that the divine name Yhwh was only revealed to Moses, as stated in Exod. 6:3: 'I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as El Shaddai, but by my name Yhwh I did not make myself known to them'. In Genesis 15, however, God addresses himself to Abram with his proper name. 'I am Yhwh, who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans' (v. 7). Abraham here comes to know before Moses the real identity of Israel's god. In a way he even surpasses Moses through his faith in Yhwh. Although Moses is, at the Pentateuch's closure, presented as incomparable, the Torah contains a story where Moses, together with Aaron is lacking faith: 'Yhwh said to Moses and Aaron, 'Because you did not have faith in me (לֹא־אִמְנַתֶּם בַּי'), to show my holiness before the eyes of the

Israelites, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land' (Numb. 20:12): Abraham, in 15:6 however, puts his faith constantly in Yhwh (בְּיְהוָה וְהָאֱמֵן) and so becomes the 'father of all believers'.

Even if Genesis 15 wants to reconcile the Patriarchal and Exodus traditions, there seems also some competition between Abraham and Moses. The last verses of Genesis 15 seem to undertake a very discrete reinterpretation of the traditional 'list of the peoples'. This list starts in the 'classical form' (six or seven peoples<sup>37</sup>) with Moses call (Exod. 3:8 and 17) and runs until the book of Kings.<sup>38</sup> It is apparently a deuteronomic construction and appears in a militaristic context, describing the nations that must be expelled from the land to be conquered. In Gen. 15:19–21 the traditional names are preceded by three unexpected ones, which seem to alter the meaning of the whole list.<sup>39</sup>

The *Kenites* are related in other biblical texts to Moses (see Judg. 1:16) and are seen in a positive way (1 Sam. 15:16: they separate from the Amalekites; Judg. 17–21: Sisera, Israel's enemy is killed by a Kenite woman).

The *Kenizzites* also have a positive connotation. Kaleb the only one who is willing, together with Joshua, to accomplish the divine will is called a Kenizzite (Numb. 32:12; Josh. 14:6 and 14). Caleb represents a clan that was integrated into Judah. If there is a link to Kenaz in Genesis 36, a list of Edomites, then the Kenizzites would stand for Judaic (Jewish?) and Edomite reconciliation.

The *Kadmonites* seem to have been invented by the author of Genesis 15. The term is apparently related to *qedem* (East) and may allude to Genesis 25 where Keturah bears sons to Abraham, whom he sends to the 'east, to the land of the east' (קְדָמָה אֶל-אֶרֶץ קְדָם) In

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<sup>37</sup> Twice only five names occur.

<sup>38</sup> T. Ishida, 'The Structure and Historical Implications of the Lists of Pre-Israelite Nations,' *Biblica* 60 (1979), 461–90.

<sup>39</sup> The Massoretic text has ten names whereas LXX mention also the Hivites. The original texts may have contained their name. A later redactor probably added the Rephaim because of their association with the Perizzites, and dropped the Hivites in order to maintain the number ten.



this case, the Kadmonites would refer to nations issued from Abraham.

That means that the three names which the author of Genesis 15 placed at the beginning of his list, modify the hostile connotation of the traditional deuteronomistic list. By starting the description of the inhabitants of the promised land with names that evoke (familiar or friendly) links with Abraham and Moses, the idea that the land must be inherited by expelling other people is criticized. The land is given to Abraham and his offspring and to all those who live in it.

### CONCLUSION

As the latest text of the Abraham narrative, Genesis 15 tries to achieve reconciliation between the patriarchal and the exodus traditions. But its author also wants to show the importance of Abraham for nascent Judaism. According to Genesis 15 Israel's first and 'ecumenical' ancestor is as important as Moses, and in some respects surpasses him: he shows that Israel does not need any more kings since the Davidic promises are democratized in Abraham. Abraham is also the first prophet, and not Moses. Like Moses, Abraham is informed about the identity of Israel's God, but contrary to Moses, the land that is promised to him does not need to be conquered by killing the inhabitants. Abraham's faith surpasses Moses', and with Gen 15,6 starts Abraham's brilliant career for later Christianity and Islam.