

Conflict and Conflict Resolution: Inner Controversies and Tensions as Places of Israel's Self-Conception in the Patriarchal Traditions of Genesis

THEODOR SEIDL (UNIVERSITY OF WÜRZBURG)¹

ABSTRACT:

One usually expects ethical themes in the Pentateuch's legal sections, for example in the Book of Covenant, the Holiness Code, Deuteronomy, and the Decalogue. However, one also encounters material for ethics in some narrative parts of the Pentateuch, first of all in the Patriarchal Traditions of Genesis. With this article, I would like to demonstrate the ethical value of the Patriarchal narratives by explaining three stories of conflict between the patriarchs and their brothers or relatives. Israel finds its identity and vocation very often in the Hebrew Bible when overcoming conflicts with inner or foreign rivals. Thus in three stories of conflict told in the Book of Genesis, I have tried to find how the narrators established moral standards for Israel and how they helped the people of Israel to find the right way of living together and the ideal way to resolve inner conflicts. In that respect Israel could find its position among the nations and its own identity.

A INTRODUCTION

Usually one would expect ethical themes² in the Pentateuch especially in its legal parts, for example in the Book of Covenant,³ the Holiness Code,⁴ Deuteronomy,⁵ and the Decalogue.⁶ Those are regarded as the main textual

¹ Prof. Theodor Seidl is a research associate of Proff. Jurie H. le Roux and Alphonso Groenewald (Dept. of Old Testament Studies, Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria).

² Eckart Otto, *Theologische Ethik des Alten Testaments* (ThW 3/2; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1994), deals generally with the subject "Ethics in Old Testament Literature."

³ See Ludger Schwienhorst-Schönberger, *Das Bundesbuch* (BZAW 188; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1990); Frank Crüsemann, *Die Tora* (Munich: Kaiser, 1992), 132-234; Christoph Dohmen, *Exodus 19-40* (HTKAT; Freiburg: Herder, 2004), 137-196.

⁴ See Crüsemann, *Tora*, 323-380; Klaus Grünwaldt, *Das Heiligkeitgesetz* (BZAW 271; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999); Eckart Otto, "Das Heiligkeitgesetz im Narrativ des Pentateuch und die Entstehung der Idee einer mosaisch-mündlichen Tradition neben der schriftlichen Tora des Mose," in *Altorientalische und biblische Rechtsgeschichte: Gesammelte Studien* (ed. Eckart Otto; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008), 539-546; See also Theodor Seidl, "Heiligkeitgesetz," *LTK*³ 4: 1327-8.

⁵ See Crüsemann, *Tora*, 235-322; Eckart Otto, *Gottes Recht als Menschenrecht: Rechts- und literaturhistorische Studien zum Deuteronomium* (Wiesbaden:

reference sources for ethical discussions. However, one will also find material for ethics in some narrative parts of the Pentateuch, first of all in the Patriarchal Traditions of Genesis.⁷

The methodical precondition for such an understanding is of course to appreciate the Patriarchs as corporate personalities representing Israel and its society,⁸ but not as individuals like chiefs of a tribe or similar communities. By means of this collective or corporate view the narratives give good examples of how Israel and those who bear responsibility in Israel should act and decide according to the ethical approaches of the Torah. By use of the interactions of their main characters, those stories show how Israel can administer justice according to its vocation among the nations.⁹ The narratives of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob try to help Israel to create its self-conception and identity.¹⁰

With this article, I would like to demonstrate the ethical value of the Patriarchal narratives by explaining three stories of conflict between the patriarchs and their brothers or relatives. Israel finds its identity and vocation very often in the Hebrew Bible when overcoming conflicts with inner or foreign rivals.¹¹ Thus in three stories of conflict told in the Book of Genesis, I have

Harrassowitz, 2002); Georg Braulik, *Die deuteronomischen Gesetze und der Dekalog* (SBS 145; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1991).

⁶ See Werner H. Schmidt, Holger Delkurt and Axel Graupner, *Die zehn Gebote im Rahmen alttestamentlicher Ethik* (EdF 281; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1993). Dominik Markl, *Der Dekalog als Verfassungsentwurf des Gottesvolkes* (HBS 49; Freiburg: Herder, 2007).

⁷ See Jan Ch. Gertz (ed.), *Grundinformation Altes Testament* (UTBfW 2745; 2nd ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 2007), 262-270 and the recent commentaries: Horst Seebass, *Vätergeschichte I* (vol. 2.1 of *Genesis*; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner, 1997); and Lothar Ruppert, *Gen 11,27-25,18* (vol. 2 of *Genesis*; FB 98; Würzburg: Echter, 2002).

⁸ According to Claus Westermann, *Genesis 12-36* (BKAT 1/2; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner, 1981), 2, 8: "Was zwischen Abraham und Sara . geschah, geschieht in unbegrenzten Variationen weiter von einer Generation des Volkes zur nächsten" and "von den Vätern wird erzählt, weil die Nachkommen im Erzählen von den Vätern ihre eigene Identität finden." The collective understanding of patriarchal figures is well represented in some texts outside the Pentateuch, e.g. Neh 9:7-8; 1 Chr 16:13 // Ps 105:6; 135:4; Isa 41:8; 44:2.

⁹ For this subject see Georg Braulik, "Erwählung," *NBL* 582-583. and recently Ernst A. Knauf, "Erwählung AT," *HGANT*: 165-167.

¹⁰ See the recent publication Hubert Irsigler (ed.), *Die Identität Israels: Entwicklungen und Kontroversen in alttestamentlicher Zeit* (HBS 56; Freiburg: Herder, 2009).

¹¹ See Irsigler, *Identität Israels*, V: "Israel hat sein ethnisches und religiöses Selbstverständnis in alttestamentlicher Zeit durch schwere Krisen und Kontroversen hindurch zu finden gesucht" and: "Die Suche nach einer kollektiven Identität konnte

tried to find how the narrators established moral standards for Israel and how they helped the people of Israel to find the right way of living together and the ideal way to resolve inner conflicts.¹² In that respect Israel could find its position among the nations and its own identity. In the following, I will present:

- Abram's controversy with Lot in Gen 13;
- The reunion of Jacob and Esau after the flight of Jacob in Gen 32-33;
- The reconciliation of Joseph and his brothers at the end of the Joseph-Story in Gen 50.

While discussing these three texts I will evaluate the context and diachronic views first; then I will discuss some formal peculiarities, namely syntactic and semantic problems; furthermore I will sketch out the structure of the narrative. In a last point I will refer to the ethical value of the story as a paradigm for Israel's vocation and its ideal assignment to be God's elected people.

B THE CONFLICT BETWEEN ABRAM AND LOT: GENESIS 13

1 The Context

Genesis 13:1-18¹³ consists of three independent literary units:¹⁴

- Verses 1-4 are a redactional itinerary leading back to Canaan after Abram's and Sara's trip to Egypt (12:10-20);¹⁵

(nur) . . . im Zusammenspiel von Selbstwahrnehmung und Fremdwahrnehmung gelingen."

¹² Ernst-Joachim Waschke, "Ein Volk aus vielen Völkern in Gottesvolk," in *Beiträge zu einem Thema biblischer Theologie* (ed. Arndt Meinhold and Rüdiger Lux; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1991), 11-28 esp. 22 explicitly emphasises that Israel survived by overcoming various periods of crisis and by finding its identity through them: "Der Glaube an die Erwählung setzte gerade dort, wo Israel in und an seiner Geschichte zu leiden hatte, unendliche Hoffnung frei."

¹³ Interpretations of the whole text one finds in Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis: übersetzt und erklärt* (HKAT 1,1; 3rd ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1910), 173-177, Claus Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, (BKAT; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchen, 1981), 197-212, Seebass, *Vätergeschichte I*, 30-42, J. Alberto Soggin, *Das Buch Genesis* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1997), 218-221, Ruppert, *Genesis 2*, 149-174.

¹⁴ For most of the interpreters, the promises of vv. 14-18 form a literary unit of its own. The itinerary of vv. 1-4 however sometimes is evaluated as the exposition of the story of conflict (vv. 5-13), e.g. by Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 199, 203: "Die Erzählung wächst aus dem Itinerar heraus." A wholistic view of 13:1-18 supports Soggin, *Genesis*, 218-221.

¹⁵ See the repetition of the local names Bet-El and Aj and the mention of building the altar (cf. Gen 12:8), according to Seebass, *Vätergeschichte I*, 31-32. Gunkel, *Gen-*

- Verses 5–13 relate a story of conflict (to be discussed below);¹⁶
- Verses 14–18 belong to the great promises for Abram without mentioning Lot.¹⁷

I am interested only in the story of conflict in vv. 5–13.¹⁸ First I will discuss its diachronic aspects.

2 Diachronic Observations

Scholars engaged in diachronic analysis agree that there are clear redactional elements in vv. 7, 10 and 13: 7b is a famous postmosaic passage,¹⁹ and vv. 10 and 13 form a redactional bracket that anticipates Gen 19, which relates the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.²⁰

However, it is highly controversial whether there are secondary elements of the P-Source in vv. 6 and 11.²¹ I think that Blum²² is on the right track when rejecting these analyses of the traditional Source criticism. There are neither heavy doublets nor tensions between vv. 5-6 and vv. 6-7 nor between vv. 11 and 12. In vv. 6²³ and 7 every sentence is needed to explain the reason why the shepherds picked a quarrel: the narrowness and smallness of the country. In the same way vv. 11-12 are necessary and concordant with v. 9: Lot carries out the proposal of Abram to separate from each other.

Thus the result of the diachronic observations is, as follows: the story vv. 5–12 is mainly a literary unit apart from the few redactional elements in vv. 7, 10 and 13 mentioned above.

esis 168-173, holds the view that 13:1-4 forms the conclusion of the story of 12:10-20.

¹⁶ Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 200 determines its three parts as follows: "Streitentstehung – Streitschlichtung – Trennung."

¹⁷ Besides, vv. 14-18 stand in contrast to vv. 5-13 as a YHWH-monologue.

¹⁸ In my view it is an independent unit, contra Erhard Blum, *Die Komposition der Vätergeschichte* (WMANT 57; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner, 1984), 284-285., who holds the opinion that 13:5-12 is only the exposition of the Abraham-Lot-complex of Gen 18f.

¹⁹ Again confirmed by Ruppert, *Genesis* 2, 158, 160, put down to "Pt^R."

²⁰ See the discussion between Ruppert, *Genesis* 2, 149.158 and Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 207-208.; cf. Blum, *Vätergeschichte*, 283.

²¹ Gunkel, *Genesis*, 174, Seebass, *Genesis II*. 39f. and Ruppert, *Genesis* 2, 149-150., 155, 158 assume P-elements; Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 201-202, 205 calls it into question; Blum, *Vätergeschichte*, 285 refuses the influence of P.

²² Blum, *Vätergeschichte*, 285.

²³ Usually taken out as a P-element.

3 Formal Analysis: Structure, Formal Aspects, Progress of the Story

The structure of the story is as follows:

- vv. 5–6: Exposition: Preconditions of the conflict
- v. 7: 1. Action: Escalation of the conflict
- vv. 8–9: 2. Speech: Abram's proposal on settling the conflict
- vv. 10–12: 3. Action: Lot's acceptance of Abram's proposal:
Separation of Abram and Lot

I now offer some formal (i.e. syntactic and semantic) observations on the text:

The exposition is clearly marked by the opening formation $w' = x-qatal$ ²⁴ in v. 5. The richness both of Abram and Lot is introduced (cf. v. 2). The Hebrew sentence formation $lō(ʾ) našā(ʾ) ʾōt-a=m ha=ʾarš la=šibt yaḥd-aw$ ²⁵ clearly illustrates the geographical situation of Palestine and the actual dilemma of the story. There is not enough room for many possessions and numerous flocks. The formula $wa=yihy$ in v. 7 links the conflict's escalation to the geographical conditions. The narrator uses the legal terms $rīb$ and $marībā$ to illustrate the conflict of the shepherds.²⁶

After these parts of action the central section of speech begins: vv. 8–9. Abram intended to avoid a conflict between near relatives. The opening vetitive $ʾal nā(ʾ) tihy marībā bēn=ī w'=bēnē=ka$ in v. 8 is to be followed by an insight presented in a remarkable syntactical formation – a nominal phrase of classification²⁷ with a striking alliteration: $ʾānašīm$ ²⁸ $ʾaḥīm$ $ʾānaḥnū$. A struggle between members of a family would threaten the existence of the whole family. Abram's definite proposal is formulated by a double conditional phrase (v. 9) that gives the freedom of decision to the younger one, namely to Lot.

²⁴ According to the verbal system and its formations in Hubert Irsigler, *Einführung in das Biblische Hebräisch* (ATSAT 9/1; St. Ottilien: EOS-Verlag, 1978), 160-161.

²⁵ I follow the system of transliteration and transcription of Wolfgang Richter, *Transliteration und Transkription* (ATSAT 19; St. Ottilien: EOS-Verlag, 1983) and Wolfgang Richter, *Biblia Hebraica Transcripta (BH^t)* (ATSAT 33.1-16; St. Ottilien: EOS-Verlag, 1991-1993).

²⁶ Ruppert, *Genesis* 2, 160 calls it "Interessenkollision." The conflict of shepherds is a favourite "topos" in the patriarchal traditions.

²⁷ According to the different types of nominal phrases presented by Wolfgang Richter, *Grundlagen einer Hebräischen Grammatik* (ATSAT 13; St. Ottilien: EOS-Verlag, 1978), 70-89.

²⁸ $ʾīš$ (pl.) might signify the category "cognates" or it could be understood as an indefinite pronoun. The NEB translates: "Because we are close kinsmen."

The third part of the story tells about the decision of Lot. He chooses the better part of the country in the east, the well-watered region of the *kikkar ha=YRDN*.²⁹ At the end of the story Abram's proposal is put into practice. Abram and Lot have separated from one another. They signify two different types of settlement: urban vs. rural (v. 12).³⁰ Abram was able to avoid the conflict between brothers though he had to give up the better part of the country.³¹ The narrator commends Abram as a good example for peacefully resolving conflicts. He represents the ethical ability of self-limitation.

4 The Ethical Value of the Story

When interpreting the narrative in a collective manner,³² Abram and Lot represent two ethnical groups, exactly two related tribes who live next to each other. According to the aetiology of Gen 19:30–38, Lot represents two tribes (later states) east of Jordan, Ammon and Moab,³³ whereas Abram stands for Israel settling in the country west of Jordan. In the period of the two monarchies, Israel and Moab/Ammon had often been at war.³⁴

Thus, the moral of the story in Gen 13 could be as follows: it serves as an admonition for Israel to treat its eastern neighbours with respect³⁵ since they are "brothers," and to abandon plans of violence and military actions against them. The story also functions as an advice for Israel to keep aloof from its eastern neighbours and to avoid interfering in their internal affairs. The story is

²⁹ See the proposals of the topographical identification of this word combination in Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 207-208, Seebass, *Vätergeschichte I*, 35-36 and Ruppert, *Genesis 2*, 162-164 with reference to Deut 34:3.

³⁰ Emphasised by Ruppert, *Genesis 2*, 163-164, 427, 431.

³¹ The hyperbole *gan[n] YHWH* in v. 10 illustrates the significance of the renunciation of Abram.

³² According to Rudolf Kilian, "Zur Überlieferungsgeschichte Lots," *BZ (NF)* 14 (1970): 23-37 (25-28); an individual interpretation of the story offer Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 202 and Ruppert, *Genesis 2*, 165-170.

³³ In the same way Kilian, *Überlieferungsgeschichte*, 26-27, 34; his dating of the story in the premonarchial period, however, is not acceptable anymore.

³⁴ Demonstrated above all by the Mesha-Inscription, see e.g. Klaas A. D. Smelik, *Historische Dokumente aus dem alten Israel* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1987), 31-49; cf. also 2 Sam 10; 11; 2 Kgs 3; the relationship between 2 Kgs 3 and the Mesha-Inscription is discussed by Stephan Timm, *Die Dynastie Omri* (FRLANT 124; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1982), 171-180, also by Smelik, *Historische*, 45-49. The territorial expansion of Moab during Mesha's reign describes Erasmus Gass, "Zur Ehud-Tradition in historisch-topographischer Hinsicht," *ZDPV* 124 (2008): 38-50 (42-43.). All references of the military conflicts between Ammon and Juda/Israel are represented by Ulrich Hübner, *Die Ammoniter* (ADPV 16; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1992), 285-286.

³⁵ According to Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 206-207 Abram represents human wisdom and the sense of responsibility; this would be the real plot of the story.

an appeal to Israel to respect and tolerate the integrity of the territories of Moab and Ammon. Only this – to stay in separation from another – can guarantee the existence of these nations living in both parts of the country, east and west of the Jordan.

When trying to situate this story into a special period of the Israelite history, one could place it within the monarchial period, as an appeal to a peaceful relationship between east and west after the heavy conflicts during the early times of the monarchy in the 9th century.³⁶ Or it could be a text of admonition in the postexilic period: Israel (Judah) should gain a new peaceful relationship towards its neighbours in the eastern parts of the country. In Deut 2:9, 19;³⁷ 23:8-9 (Isa 21:11-12) are similar appeals to deal fairly with the eastern neighbours, especially Moab and Edom.

Literarily, Gen 13 could be a contrastive text with the polemic aetiology of Moab and Ammon in Gen 19:30–38,³⁸ whose message is to come closer to the eastern people and to approach one another more peacefully.³⁹

³⁶ See Stephan Timm, *Moab zwischen den Mächten*, (ÄAT 17; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1989), 61-157 and Hübner, *Ammoniter*, 283-320; both are discussing the political constellations of Moab and Ammon in the 1st millennium B.C.E..

³⁷ The importance of these references for a better relationship between Israel and Moab/Edom is also seen by Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 384 and by Hübner, *Ammoniter*, 292, 323, 325.

³⁸ Hübner, *Ammoniter*, 294-297 comments on the text as "polemische israelitische Fremddarstellung der beiden Nachbarvölker." Blum, *Vätergeschichte*, 281-286 does not take into account the strong contrast between Gen 13 and Gen 19 in his view on Moab and Ammon.

³⁹ Konrad Schmid, "Die Versöhnung zwischen Jakob und Esau (Gen 33,1-11)," in *Jacob: Festschrift Albert de Pury* (ed. Jean-Daniel Macchi and Thomas Römer; MdB 44; Genf: Labor et Fides, 2001), 211-226 (213-214) holds the opinion that the patriarchal narratives would justify Israel's existence in Canaan and regulate the relationship to its eastern neighbours; the Lot-tradition especially would reflect the constellation "Juda-Moab-Ammon."

C THE REUNION OF JACOB AND ESAU IN GENESIS 32–33***1 The Context**

The analysis of the second Patriarchal narrative starts just at the point where the cycle of tales about Jacob and Laban has come to an end (29:1–32:1)⁴⁰ and where the cycle of tales about Jacob and Esau⁴¹ will be continued. The connecting point is 28:9.

The aetiological text Gen 32:2-3 explaining the place name Mahanajim,⁴² is not discussed here, though this text might be in agreement with some traces of the following story⁴³ (cf. 32:8, 11: speaking of two camps). But I think 32:2-3 is based on a special tradition⁴⁴ not to be touched upon here.

The story of Jacob's fight at the Jabbok-River (32:23–33) will also not be discussed, because only Jacob is focused upon here; moreover, some commentators⁴⁵ consider it a later insertion to prepare Jacob mentally for the meeting with his hostile brother. Though some recent authors⁴⁶ try hard to find connections between the nightly fight and the surrounding texts, this discussion⁴⁷ cannot be covered adequately. Therefore this text falls outside the scope of the task.

The analysis of the text starts exactly in 32:4 and finishes at the point when the ways of Jacob and Esau are separated: Esau goes back to Seir (33:16),

⁴⁰ According to Gunkel, *Genesis*, 353, Gerhard von Rad, *Das erste Buch Mose. Genesis* (ATD 2/4; 9th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck 1972), 246, 254. Thomas Römer, "Genèse 32,2-22: Préparations d'un recontre," in *Jacob: Festschrift Albert de Pury* (ed. Jean-Daniel Macchi and Thomas Römer; MdB 44; Genf: Labor et Fides, 2001), 181-196 (183) against Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 615.

⁴¹ The concept of the Jacob traditions in Gen and its parts introduces Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 496-500.

⁴² Against this usual classification argues Römer, *Préparations*, 188, 191: only a literary construction.

⁴³ Römer, *Préparations*, 187 assumes a synchronic connection, Lothar Ruppert, *Genesis* (vol. 3; FB 106; Würzburg: Echter, 2005), 340-341, 344-345 a diachronic one.

⁴⁴ According to Horst Seebass, *Vätergeschichte II* (vol. 2.2 of *Genesis*; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1999), 377-379 and Ruppert, *Genesis 3*, 334-338, 341, 344-345.

⁴⁵ E.g. Soggin, *Genesis*, 296: Interrupts "den Faden der Erzählung."

⁴⁶ Such as Blum, *Vätererzählungen*, 143-145.

⁴⁷ See the detailed interpretation of Walter Dietrich, "Jakobs Kampf am Jabbok (Gen 32,23-33)," in *Jacob: Festschrift Albert de Pury* (eds. Jean-Daniel Macchi and Thomas Römer; MdB 44; Genf: Labor et Fides, 2001), 197-210.

Jacob goes over to Sukkot (33:17). Chapter 33:18–20 is an independent itinerary;⁴⁸ in any case ch. 34 represents an independent tradition.

2 Diachronic Results

True, it would be interesting to enter into a detailed discussion of the questions of literary criticism of the chosen text, namely the debate about its literary unity. There are many opinions concerning development and growth of the text,⁴⁹ since one finds enough criteria of growth like doublets and tensions. But no author working diachronically with the text could find a convincing solution. Thus, it stands to reason that there is also a group that reads both chapters as a literary unit in a holistic manner.⁵⁰

However, delving into that interesting discussion would go too far. Therefore, I will only refer to the results of my intense diachronic research, which I did in a special article.⁵¹

This is my solution of the literary growth of our text. I have distinguished a primary narrative from two expansions of that narrative. In the following the extent of all 3 layers of Gen 32–33 is given:

The primary layer covers 32:4–9, 14a; 33:1–7, 12–17

The contents of the primary layer are as follows:

Jacob while coming back from his stay with Laban sends first a legation to his brother Esau to find his favour. But the legates are only able to report that Esau is already coming against Jacob together with 400 soldiers. Jacob is

⁴⁸ According to Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 643, Seebass, *Vätergeschichte II*, 411–417 and Ruppert, *Genesis 3*, 407–416 (408): "Mit der Ortsveränderung Jakobs beginnt eine neue Einheit."

⁴⁹ See the representatives of the classical Source Criticism since Gunkel, *Genesis*, 356–359 like Seebass, *Vätergeschichten II*, 380–386. 386–390 and Ruppert, *Genesis 3*, 339–405 or the representatives of the Redactional Criticism like Thomas Nauerth, *Untersuchungen zur Komposition der Jakobserzählungen* (BEATAJ 27; Frankfurt: Lang, 1997), 199–232, Schmid, *Versöhnung*, 211–226. Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 614 rejects the possibility of dividing up the text of 32:4–22 into sources.

⁵⁰ Since Blum, *Vätererzählungen*, 141–143; see also Erhard Blum, "Genesis 33,12–20: Die Wege trennen sich" in *Jacob: Festschrift Albert de Pury* (ed. Jean-Daniel Macchi and Thomas Römer; MdB 44; Genf: Labor et Fides, 2001), 227–238 and Römer, *Préparations*, 181–196, though he admits some diachronic expansions. A pure holistic study was already presented by Jan P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in Genesis: Specimens of Stylistic and Structural Analysis* (Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1975), 197–231.

⁵¹ See Theodor Seidl, "Konflikt und Konfliktlösung," in *Die Identität Israels: Entwicklungen und Kontroversen in alttestamentlicher Zeit* (ed. Hubert Irsigler; HBS 56; Freiburg: Herder, 2009), 1–38 (10–27).

frightened and takes measures of precaution by dividing his people into two camps. He stays there overnight (32:4–9, 14a).⁵²

In the next scene⁵³ Jacob is aware of Esau standing immediately in front of him with 400 men. Jacob organises his wives and children and comes ahead of his family to meet Esau. Then, he falls down before Esau seven times (33:1–3). However, Esau receives his brother very friendly, embracing and kissing him after which they wept together. Afterwards Esau posed a question concerning Jacob's children, whom Jacob calls a present of God. At last, the wives and the children fall down before Esau (33:1–7). In the last scene (12–17)⁵⁴ Esau tries to convince Jacob of joining him and staying together. But Jacob refuses by using different kinds of excuses. At the end, Esau and Jacob separate and go on different ways (33:12–17).

This primary narration was expanded twice:⁵⁵

First, by the prayer of Jacob in 32:10–13 said after the return of the delegation bringing bad news. Most scholars⁵⁶ agree on the secondary character of the prayer: It uses elements of the psalmodic poetry (vv. 11, 12), and also elements of the standardised redundant patriarchal promises (v. 13). It also has a different understanding of the title *‘abd* (v. 11): Here it is a term of the relationship to God, while in the context, *‘abd* characterises the relationship between Jacob and Esau.⁵⁷

⁵² In my view this exposition of the primary layer forms a unity, contra Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 614, 619 and Ruppert, *Genesis 3*, 339-345 who divides the text into the layers "E" and "Je."

⁵³ The unity of 33:1-7 is discussed by the previous research of which Schmid, *Versöhnung*, 219 n. 25 is informing, also by Seebass, *Vätergeschichte II*, 409 (vv. 1-3, 6-7: "J"; vv. 4-5: "E") and Ruppert, *Genesis 3*, 391-399 (vv. 1a, 4: "E"; vv. 1b-3, 5-7: "Je").

⁵⁴ According to Seebass, *Vätergeschichte II*, 409 a literary unit against Ruppert, *Genesis 3*, 392, 400-403 who distributes to "Je" (Vv. 12-15) and "E" (Vv. 16-17).

⁵⁵ Schmid, *Versöhnung*, 218 n. 24 also uses a model of expansion while discussing the unity of the text 33:1-11.

⁵⁶ E.g. Blum, *Vätererzählungen*, 152-154, Josef Schreiner, "Das Gebet Jakobs (Gen 32,10-13)," in *Die Väter Israels: Festschrift J. Scharbert* (ed. Manfred Görg; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1989), 287-303, Römer, *Préparations*, 186f. Countering them Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 614, 619-620 and Ruppert, *Genesis 3*, 339-340 think at least vv. 10a and 12 would belong to the original story; while Seebass, *Vätergeschichte II*, 381, 383-384, 386 assumes the whole prayer is original and even forms the climax of the narration.

⁵⁷ Additional arguments for the secondary character of the prayer and its dating into the postexilic era gives Schreiner, *Gebet*, 287-303.

I found a second expansion in 32:14b–22. Already the previous source criticism labelled that section as a parallel text to 32:4–14.⁵⁸ The main reasons for the separation of this text segment are as follows: In 32:14b–22 Jacob shows different characteristics. He is not a fearful, frightened man as in 32:4–9. On the contrary, he is replete with self-confidence and absolutely determined to be reconciled with his brother by means of a huge present, a *minḥa* he is preparing with greatest care and distinct calculation. I decided to connect the section of preparing a huge *minḥā*⁵⁹ in 32:14b–22 with the difficult section of 33:8–11,⁶⁰ in which Jacob tries to convince Esau to accept the *minḥā*. Thus, both sections are corresponding due to the medium *minḥā* for Esau, that functions as an expanding aspect to the primary narration where Jacob tries to get Esau's reconciliation only by submitting to Esau.

In the following, I will analyse and explain the primary narration first and afterwards both expansions.

3 Formal Analysis of the Primary Narration:

Structure, formal aspects, progress of the story

The structure of the primary narration displays 3 sections:

- | | | |
|---|------------|---|
| 1 | 32:4–9.14a | Jacob sends a legation to Esau
Report of the legates
Jacob tries to protect his property from Esau
→ <i>Action and speech in balance</i> |
| 2 | 33:1–7 | Jacob meets Esau
Jacob tries to protect wives and children from Esau
Jacob submits to Esau
Esau and Jacob become reconciled
Jacob's wives and children submit to Esau
→ <i>Action has the priority</i> |

⁵⁸ See Gunkel, *Genesis*, 356 whom Seebass, *Vätergeschichte II*, 380-386, 386-390 follows still; one can agree with his opinion: "Daß man das Stück" (sc. 32:14b-22) "für sich zu nehmen hat, zeigt ausschlaggebend die Tatsache, daß auf die vorhergehenden Maßnahmen (sc. 32:4-14a) mit keinem Wort eingegangen wird." But since Blum, *Vätererzählungen*, 141-143 there is a trend to dispense with a separation of two parallel texts and to interpret vv. 2-22 as a unity, also Römer, *Préparations*, 184-188.

⁵⁹ There are similar deliberations of Ruppert, *Genesis* 3, 394, 399 and Nauerth, *Komposition*, 213. The main problem of 33:8 is the tension that it speaks only of one *maḥnā* in contrast to 32:8 (two *maḥnōt*); this problem is broadly discussed by Ruppert, *Genesis* 3, 399; Seebass, *Vätergeschichte II*, 407, Schmid, *Versöhnung*, 2178-2221.

⁶⁰ Schmid, *Versöhnung*, 220 sees the word play with *maḥnā*, *minḥā* in such a confusion that a diachronic solution becomes necessary.

- 3 33:12–17 Esau proposes to live in companionship with Jacob
 Jacob does not accept the proposal
 Esau and Jacob separate from each other
 → *Speech has the priority*

I will present only a few examples of formal observations picked out of each section:

At the beginning of section 1 is the so-called "formula of legation"⁶¹ with the elements *šalah*, *šiwwā*, *mal'ak*: it describes the order to the legation and the message of the legates.

The message to Esau is characterised by submissive language: Jacob talks like a vassal to his brother (cf. the terms *'adōn* and *'abd* in v. 5). This conduct is significant for all addresses of Jacob to Esau in the following story.⁶²

There is no report about the carrying out of the legation but only the message of the legates. However the law of conciseness in story-telling ("Brevi-loquence") can be observed.⁶³

When Jacob converses with himself in v. 9 and considers how to survive, the narrator uses a conditional clause (*w'='im yiqtol* – *w'=qatal*): What might happen if Esau acts violently? These are the thoughts of the scared Jacob.

Section 2 is clearly dominated by action: the narrator vividly describes Jacob's efforts to protect his wives and his children (vv. 1-2), the reunion of both brothers (vv. 3-4),⁶⁴ and the submission of the whole family of Jacob; syntactically he uses a series of *wa=yiqtol*-sentences.

The lively actions are interrupted in v. 5 only once by a very short dialogue with Esau asking for Jacob's wives and children and getting a very short answer of Jacob: His children are a gift of God's mercy (*HNN*).⁶⁵

Using significant verbs the narrator gives information about the progress and the character of the reunion:

⁶¹ According to Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 617f. and Römer, *Préparations*, 192.

⁶² See Römer, *Préparations*, 192, "langage de soumission de Jacob."

⁶³ According to Hubert Irsigler, "Zeichen und Bezeichnetes in Jes 7,1-17" *BN* 29 (1985): 75-114 (77-78); he observes this law also in Jes 7:9.

⁶⁴ Schmid, *Versöhnung*, 222-223 refers to the parallels in the story of Joseph (Gen 45:14f.; 46:29); he assumes a dependency of the author of the Joseph story on the Jacob tradition.

⁶⁵ According to Schmidt, *Versöhnung*, 223 a reference to the etymologies of the children's names in Gen 29 where the children of Jacob and their wives are also presented as gifts of Elohim.

HṢY in v. 1 is the same verb as in 32:8 for Jacob dividing his cattle in two parts; here he divides his children, that is, he allocates his children to their mothers (v. 2).⁶⁶

The terms of rapprochement are taken again from vassal and treaty terminology:⁶⁷ *NGŠ* (*N*) and *HWY* (*Št*) are used both for Jacob (v. 3) and for his family (v. 7). The submission of Jacob is expressed even seven times; it is an act of total submission like that towards a king⁶⁸ or a deity (*HWY*). The atmosphere at a royal court is also present in the author's description which he uses to demonstrate how wives and children perfectly organised in three groups are approaching Esau (vv. 6-7).

In section 3 speech and dialogue have priority:

Three adhortatives open the address of Esau with which he tries to convince his brother to go and stay together: v. 12: *nīs[sa]ʿ-ah, nilik-ah, ʿilik-ah*.

The answer of Jacob in v. 13 is very polite, full of subordination by using again the treaty terms of *ʿadōn=ī* and *ʿabd=ō*. But this is only the surface. All his excuses (vv. 13, 14) are rhetorical forms to refuse and reject Esau's intentions to stick together.⁶⁹ Even Esau's offer in v. 15 to grant protection to Jacob's family is politely refused in a subtle rhetorical way:

15d: *la-mah zā ʿimṣā(ʿ) ḥin bʿ=ʿēnē ʿadōn=ī* is one sentence⁷⁰ and not two as in many translations:

Not: Why that? If only I could find mercy. . . ,⁷¹ but: Why at all should I find such a plenty of mercy, that means: it is too much; you have already granted to me sufficient mercy.⁷²

In other words, the sentence 15d expresses again Jacob's refusal.⁷³ He does not want a fitting nearness to Esau though the brothers are reconciled.

⁶⁶ Ruppert, *Genesis* 3, 397 discusses the motifs of this drawing up.

⁶⁷ Many authors like. Schmid, *Versöhnung*, 221 draw the attention to the court style of the Amarna letters, cf. EA 286:3; 289:3.

⁶⁸ See Schmid, *Versöhnung*, 221, ". . . so verhält sich ein Vasall seinem König gegenüber."

⁶⁹ Blum, *Wege*, 232: "Der Situation entsprechend geht Jakob den schmalen Grad zwischen Täuschung und Enttäuschung."

⁷⁰ The usual translation "why that" or "what need is there" would require a Hebrew *la-mah zō(ʿ)t*. *zā* intensifies here and in other references (e.g. Gen 18:13b; 25:22d) the interrogative particle *la-mah*, cf. GKC § 136c.

⁷¹ See RSV, "What need is there? Let me find favour in the sight of my Lord."

⁷² See The NEB, "Why should my lord be so kind to me."

⁷³ Westermann, *Genesis* 12-36, 642 interprets correctly, "Eine verhüllte Entscheidung zur Trennung."

Thus, to stay separated is better than to remain together. The separation of both groups⁷⁴ is told at the end of the primary narration (vv. 16-17).

4 The Ethical Value of the Primary Narration

Within the scope of the collective interpretation⁷⁵ there are plenty of aspects of an ideal ethical acting and deciding for Israel and its neighbours, especially Edom, represented by Jacob's and Esau's behaviour: there are three points of ethical advice for Israel in the story enshrined in the model of Jacob:

- (i) At first, Israel should take care of the weakest members of its society, namely the women and the children. It is striking how often the story talks about women and children. Like Jacob, who places himself before the rows of his wives and children (33:3a: *'abar l'=panē=him*), Israel and its authorities should be committed to protect women and children as a guarantee for the future.⁷⁶
- (ii) In case of war and siege Israel should better decide in favour of a peaceful submission than continuing war and struggle in order to save human life, again the lives of its women and children. Here a parallel might be found to Jeremiah's advice in Jer 38:14–28⁷⁷ to deliver Jerusalem to the Babylonians and to surrender without fighting to save the lives of the residents.
- (iii) One may find a third advice for Israel in the plot of the story: sometimes it might be better to distance oneself from the neighbouring state,⁷⁸ even to recognise its supremacy or at least its autonomy than to enter in an artificial coalition, which will lead to new conflicts. Hence a parallel to the story of Gen 13. But Esau also represents an ethical model for Israel:

Like Esau Israel should accept the confession and repentance of his enemies. Like Esau Israel should give up any form of violence, like Esau Israel should also be prepared and willing for reconciliation and coexistence.

⁷⁴ Blum, *Wege*, 232 speaks of a "separation formula" and presents its references.

⁷⁵ This view is also significant for the interpretation of the whole cycle of Jacob (Gen 25*; 27-33) done by Blum, *Vätererzählungen*, 71, 175-186, Römer, *Préparations*, 189-191 and Schmid, *Versöhnung*, 223-226.

⁷⁶ This tendency is common with Jacob's prayer which expresses the fear for mother and children in 32:12: *w'=hikk-a=nī 'al banīm*. Schreiner, *Gebet*, 301 and Römer, *Préparations*, 194 share the opinion that Jacob's prayer belongs to the Persian era, when Juda was frequently attacked by Edom.

⁷⁷ See the interpretation of Gunther Wanke, *Jeremia* (vol. 2; ZBKAT 20.2; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag 2003), 352-353 who refers to the parallel of Jer 34:1-6.

⁷⁸ See Schmid, *Versöhnung*, 224-225, "Hier wird das friedliche Nebeneinander Israels und Edoms begründet . . . Nur in getrennten Territorien kann man friedlich nebeneinander leben."

Some approaches of modern scholars attempt to situate this narration in a specific era of the history of Israel:

Römer⁷⁹ (with Knauf)⁸⁰ considers the Neo-Assyrian era at a time when Judah and Edom were similarly threatened by the powerful enemy, whereas Wahl⁸¹ proposes the last years of the monarchy in Judah during the Babylonian siege.

In both cases the story represents an appeal to submission to and recognition of the more powerful opponent.

Another proposal would be to situate the text in the postexilic era as a counterpoint to the hostile and polemic texts against Edom from that era to be found in Obadiah, Jer 49:7–22, Ps 137:7.⁸²

In that case this narration could be an appeal to postexilic Yehud to aim at another, more peaceful relationship towards the Edomites, Judah's brothers in the south-east of the country – a good parallel to Gen 13, the first story that tried to compete for an understanding of Moab and Ammon.

5 The Ethical Value of the Second Expansion: Genesis 32:14–22; 33:8–11

I will evaluate directly the longer expansions in Gen 32 and 33 without presenting the formal observations I did in the detailed version of this paper.⁸³

In the sections 32:14–22; 33:8–11, *minhā* is the story's key-word. Preparing a large *minhā* is the way in which Jacob tries to achieve forgiveness and mercy from Esau. *minhā* is in this context both a cultic and a legal term.⁸⁴ It expresses Jacob's intention to compensate the damage he caused against Esau; in the same way Jacob makes the confession that he harmed Esau. There are other cultic terms that are noticeable: *KPR* (D)⁸⁵ in 32:21d, *R'Y panīm*⁸⁶

⁷⁹ Römer, *Préparations*, 190.

⁸⁰ Ernst A. Knauf, "Bethel," in *RGG* 1: 1375-1376.

⁸¹ Harald M. Wahl, *Die Jakobserzählungen* (BZAW 258; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997), 302-310.

⁸² Those polemic texts are the reason why Schmid, *Versöhnung*, 225-226 hesitates to assign the Jakob-Esau-texts of Gen 32-33 to a specific historical period or to a special politic situation; he prefers the assumption Jacob's submission to Esau would be only a literary allusion to Gen 25:23 and 27:29.

⁸³ See Seidl, *Konflikt*, 22-26.

⁸⁴ Ruppert, *Genesis* 3, 354 discusses the semantics of *minhā*; *ad locum* he favours "Tribut" or "Huldigungsgabe."

⁸⁵ Bernd Janowski, *Sühne als Heilsgeschehen* (WMANT 55; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner, 1982), 96-98 understands *KPR-D* in 21d within the legal vassal- and treaty-terminology of the section: The 'abd Jacob gives his reverence for the 'adōn Esau; Westermann, *Genesis* 12-36, 21-22 emphasises the coherence with the whole

(32:21e; 33:10e.eI), *NS'* *panīm*⁸⁷ (32:21f); *panīm* is repeated in 32:21d-22a four times, thus another key-word. Jacob hopes to save his face by soothing Esau's face.

The obvious use of cultic and legal terms and the cultic analogies (in addition to this: *hin[n]*,⁸⁸ *RŠY*, *bārakā*⁸⁹ in 33:10) may be indicative of putting the sections of this expansion (32:14–22; 33:8–11) closer to the priestly texts of the Pentateuch.

The meaning and the consequences for Israel could be:

- Israel is called to confess its mistakes and sins committed through generations.
- Israel is reminded to atone for its sins and faults by offerings and cultic actions.⁹⁰

Maybe one can go a step further:

- Israel should recognise that cultic atonement has to bring forth reconciliation and forgiveness between nations and tribes, who are in conflict, especially between brothers and fellow citizens.

In that way the sections of expansion introduce additional ethical aspects into our discussion.

D The Reconciliation of Joseph and his Brothers: Genesis 50:15–21

1 The Context and the Literary Unity

The third example for conflict and conflict resolving I have chosen represents the end of the non-priestly story of Joseph.⁹¹ Some of the surrounding texts in

Jacob-Esau-cycle: Jacob returns the stolen blessing to Esau; Römer, *Préparations*, 195 and Ruppert, *Genesis 3*, 356 interpret *KPR-D* on the sapiential background of Prov 16:14.

⁸⁶ For Blum, *Vätererzählungen*, 143-144 and for Römer, *Préparations*, 196 a literary anticipation of Jacob's nightly struggle, cf. 32:31b: *kī ra'itī 'ilō*hīm panīm 'il panīm*.

⁸⁷ See 1 Sam 25:35; Job 42:9; cf. Gen 40:13,20 (*NS'* *rō(')š*); Römer, *Préparations*, 195, "... le contexte des audiences royales."

⁸⁸ The semantic field of *HNN* which is used in 32:6; 33:5,8,10,11 is according to Ruppert, *Genesis 3*, 396, 399 a sign for his textlayer, "Je" which is significant for Judah and its clear distance to Edom.

⁸⁹ According to many authors a resumption of the main theme of Gen 27, cf. e.g. Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 638, 641 and Ruppert, *Genesis 3*, 400.

⁹⁰ See Isa 40:2 where it is stated that the people of Jerusalem had done enough for compensation of their guilt.

Gen 47,⁹² 49⁹³ and 50 belong to the priestly source, for example 50:12-13⁹⁴ the burial of Jacob in Machpelah fronting our section, and – immediately after it – 50:22–26,⁹⁵ where Joseph demands to be buried also in Canaan.

The section, 50:15–21, does not display any priestly elements; it is a story of its own with a new topic and a special plot: the relationship between Joseph and his brothers after the death of their father Jacob.

Westermann's commentary⁹⁶ created a lively discussion about its genuineness, since he fixed the original end of the story of Joseph already at the end of ch. 45. But Blum,⁹⁷ K. Schmid,⁹⁸ and recently Ebach⁹⁹ and Ruppert¹⁰⁰ confirmed the view that this section is the real and original "Finale" of the story of Joseph.

⁹¹ The following interpretation is based on Gunkel, *Genesis*, 487-497, Claus Westermann, *Genesis 37-50* (BKAT 1/3; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner, 1982), 230-233; Harald Schweizer, *Argumentation* (vol. 1 of *Die Josefsgeschichte: Konstituierung des Textes*; TThHLLI 4/1; Tübingen: Francke, 1991), 305-324; Harald Schweizer, *Textband* (vol. 2 of *Die Josefsgeschichte: Konstituierung des Textes*; TThHLLI 4/2; Tübingen: Francke, 1991), 152-153, 181; Horst Seebass, *Josephsgeschichte* (vol. 3 of *Genesis*; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner, 2000), 197-202; Konrad Schmid, "Die Josephsgeschichte im Pentateuch," in *Abschied vom Jahwisten: Die Komposition des Hexateuch in der jüngsten Diskussion* (ed. Jan Gertz, Konrad Schmid and Markus Witte; BZAW 315; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2002), 83-118, Jürgen Ebach, "'Ja bin denn ich an Gottes Stelle?' (Genesis 50,19)," *BibInt* 11 (2003): 602-616; Jürgen Ebach, *Genesis 37-50* (HTKAT; Freiburg: Herder 2007), 650-665; Lothar Ruppert, *Gen 37,1-50,26* (vol. 4 of *Genesis*; FB 118; Würzburg: Echter, 2008), 523-536.

⁹² Gen 47:27-28, see Martin Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichte des Pentateuch* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1948), 18; Seebass, *Josephsgeschichte*, 158-159, Schmid, *Josephsgeschichte*, 92.

⁹³ Gen 49:29-33, see Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichte*, 18; Seebass, *Josephsgeschichte*, 183; Schmid, *Josephsgeschichte*, 92-115.

⁹⁴ See Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichte*, 18; Seebass, *Josephsgeschichte*, 195; Schmid, *Josephsgeschichte*, 92, 103.

⁹⁵ See the discussion presented by Seebass, *Josephsgeschichte*, 207 and Schmid, *Josephsgeschichte*, 92.103.

⁹⁶ Westermann, *Genesis 37-50*, 11-12, 16.

⁹⁷ Blum, *Vätererzählungen*, 241.

⁹⁸ Schmid, *Josephsgeschichte*, 91, 99-103.

⁹⁹ Ebach, "'Gottes Stelle,'" 610-611 and Ebach, *Genesis 37-50*, 689-692.

¹⁰⁰ Ruppert, *Genesis 4*, 525,

There is hardly any doubt about the literary unity of this third text.¹⁰¹ Therefore I turn immediately into the formal analysis by elaborating its structure.

2 Structure, Formal Aspects, Progress of the Story

First, I will present the structure. I distinguish three parts within the narration:

A	15a.b:	Joseph's brothers recognise their situation after their father's death:	<i>Action</i>
B	15c–21b:	The brothers and Joseph	
1.	15c–eR:	Fear of the brothers:	<i>Speech</i>
2.	16a–17:	Decision to send a legation to Joseph with Jacob's last will:	<i>Speech</i>
3.	17e:	Emotional reaction of Joseph:	<i>Action</i>
4.	18a–d:	The brothers meet Joseph and submit themselves to him as slaves:	<i>Action + Speech</i>
5.	19–21b.	Joseph calms down and comforts his brothers:	<i>Speech</i>
C	21c.d:	Résumé: Joseph comforts his brothers:	<i>Action</i>

One can recognise a framework encompassing the small story:

First it offers an introduction with a description of the new situation (A). At the end the solution, the relationship between the brothers is resolved (C). In the main part (B) a vivid change of action and speech is realised; there are deliberations, legations, quotations and dialogue.

I again will give some examples of syntactic and semantic peculiarities:

In 15d, during the considerations of the brothers, there is an incomplete conditional clause: only a protasis "if Joseph would treat us with hostility" (*ŠTM*), the apodosis such as "what should we do then?" is missing.¹⁰²

In 20a.b is a word-play with the verb *ḤŠB*¹⁰³ in different constructions: 20a with a direct object ("you have planned evil") and 20b with two objects (affect-effect, result) ("God has changed the evil into good": *l' = tōbā*).

These two sentences underline the good resolution of the story of Joseph.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ With the exception of Schweizer, *Argumentation*, 308f., 318 (without vv. 16, 17) and Ruppert, *Genesis 4*, 526 (vv. 15-20a.bα: "E"; vv. 20bβ.21: "Je").

¹⁰² Schweizer, *Argumentation*, 317 gives the explanation, "(Der Nachsatz bleibt) der textpragmatischen Entschlüsselung durch den Leser überlassen."

¹⁰³ Ebach, "Gottes Stelle," 609 and Ebach, *Genesis 37-50*, 662 emphasises the financial meaning of *ḤŠB*; considerations to the different constructions of *ḤŠB* are also made by Ruppert, *Genesis 4*, 529f., 532f.

As in the previous texts some interesting legal terms can be observed. They demonstrate the dominance of ethical questions: on the one hand, is there punishment for the brothers because of their harm to Joseph? Who will punish them? On the other hand, is there forgiveness and pardon for them?

Within that semantic field one can find the following legal terms:

ŠTM – "to accuse so" (15d).

*ŠūB ha=ra' la=nū*¹⁰⁵ – "to take revenge," "use retaliation" (15e).

Both terms are used in the fearful thoughts of the brothers.

The last will of their father¹⁰⁶ culminates in the repeated¹⁰⁷ imperative of 17b.d: *šā nā(?) paš' aḥē=ka. NŠ' paš' awōn* is a formula not only for divine forgiveness as Ebach¹⁰⁸ thinks, but also for interpersonal forgiveness.¹⁰⁹ Therefore, I suppose that Joseph grants this forgiveness to his brothers at the end of the story and does not leave it to God.¹¹⁰

Legal – or better expressed as vassal – terminology as in Jacob's story is registered in v. 18 with the brothers falling down before Joseph and submitting themselves as slaves: *NPL l'=pan-a(y)=w,*¹¹¹ *'abadīm*.

This dominance of legal terminology formally characterises the main plot of the story: how to get compensation for evil deeds and how reconciliation of adversaries is possible.

The moral of the Joseph story is: compensation is superfluous because God transforms evil to good.

¹⁰⁴ According to Ruppert, *Genesis 4*, 529-533.

¹⁰⁵ Edgar Jans, *Abimelech und sein Königtum* (ATSAT 66; St. Ottilien: EOS-Verlag, 2001), 412 presents more references of this formula.

¹⁰⁶ The question, is the last will fiction or reality, is broadly discussed by Schweizer, *Argumentation*, 308, 318, Seebass, *Josephsgeschichte*, 199 and Ebach, *Genesis 37-50*, 653-654.

¹⁰⁷ According to Schweizer, *Argumentation*, 102 an element of emphasis.

¹⁰⁸ Ebach, "'Gottes Stelle,'" 609-610.

¹⁰⁹ See 1 Sam 25:28; Isa 53:4-6. For the idea of carrying away the burden of the sins see Lev 16:21,22.

¹¹⁰ Against Ebach, "'Gottes Stelle,'" 609-610, who assumes Joseph would only comfort the brothers and support them; Ruppert, *Genesis 4*, 534-535 follows Ebach's thesis. However, Ebach, *Genesis 37-50*, 656-657, revised his position and concedes now also the meaning "to forgive."

¹¹¹ According to Ebach, "'Gottes Stelle,'" 606, a keyword of the whole Joseph story. The lexematic reference to Gen 37:9,10 has been recognised since Gunkel, *Genesis*, 490. In addition to this, Ebach, "'Gottes Stelle,'" 603, 606-607, thinks that Joseph's dreams are corrected now because he refuses his brother's submission.

Reconciliation is granted by Joseph because of three reasons: because of Jacob's last will, because of the common faith in the same God¹¹² and because Joseph does not want to take God's place as the highest legal authority.¹¹³

3 The Ethical Value of Genesis 50:15–21

Joseph is of course a paradigm of an ideal Israel¹¹⁴ who acts according to the ethics of the Torah:

- Israel should give up thoughts of revenge and power like Joseph especially in case there is a conflict between its tribes, groups or parties. Instead of revenge and punishment forgiveness in the name of the common god, namely the God of the ancestors, should prevail as it is stated in the last will of Jacob: 17d. There is another theological reason for granting forgiveness and avoiding revenge: nobody stands in the "place of God" (19c), as Joseph says. In other words, neither Israel nor its authorities should abuse their position.
- The resulting positive consequence for Israel should be the following – and this seems to be a parallel to the Jacob-Esau-story: Israel and its authorities should always take care of all their brothers and should fully support them. It should be a basic task and duty of Israel to be concerned about everyone in its society.
- I owe an additional and last aspect to K. Schmid:¹¹⁵ Like Joseph's brothers after the death of their father, Israel has to find its standpoint from era to era according to the current requirements. Schmid thinks that the Israel at the end of the Joseph story is changing its position from a genealogical unity to a "nation of will" ("Willensnation"), a nation that is able to find its identity by reflecting and by reacting to the challenges of each situation. Therefore K. Schmid dates the Joseph story to the postexilic era when Israel was subordinate to foreign supremacies.

However, concerning the chronology of the Joseph story I suppose that one can label it a paradigm of every internal conflict in the preexilic as well as

¹¹² See Westermann, *Genesis 37-50*, 231, "Es verbindet sie die Beziehung zu dem gleichen Gott, dem Gott ihrer Familie"; in the same sense Seebass, *Josephsgeschichte*, 199 and Ruppert, *Genesis 4*, 534.

¹¹³ This does not exclude the forgiveness Joseph grants to his brothers as Ebach, "Gottes Stelle," 606-610 wrongly assumes; he too strictly separates the sentence of 19c from the aims of the divine acting in 20b. I better agree with Seebass, *Josephsgeschichte*, 200 and Marc Rastoin, "Suis-je à la place de Dieu, moi?" *RB* 114 (2007): 333-347 (345-347), who both hold that human forgiveness does not mean to take God's place.

¹¹⁴ In the same sense Schmid, *Josephsgeschichte*, 106-114.

¹¹⁵ Schmid, *Josephsgeschichte*, 111-114.

in the postexilic era.¹¹⁶ By explaining three patriarchal narratives, I tried to show how important their contribution to ethics in the Pentateuch is.

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¹¹⁶ In consense with Ebach, *Genesis 37-50*, 688, "In der diachron beurteilten Josephsgeschichte sind weite Teile der Geschichte Israels präsent." Different positions for the chronology of the Josephstory are represented e.g. by Frank Crüsemann, *Widerstand gegen das Königtum* (WMANT 49; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner, 1978), 147-149 (era of Solomon), or Blum, *Vätererzählungen*, 243-244 (late monarchical period of the northern kingdom).

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Prof. Dr. Theodor Seidl, (Emeritus) Professor for Old Testament Studies and Ancient Near Eastern Languages, Catholic Faculty of Theology, Sanderring 2, D-97070 Würzburg, Germany. Private: Benediktenweg 1, D-85298 Scheyern, Germany; Email: theo.seidl@t-online.de.