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Traumatic Themes in Genesis 17 and 23

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis I explore how Gen 17 and 23 contain themes of trauma. For the purpose of this research, I am combining the disciplines of historical criticism, literary criticism, and trauma theory. Genesis 17 and 23 are narratives of non-typical length in the Priestly source of Genesis. I explain how these narratives fit into the larger Priestly strand in Genesis through a combination of diachronic and synchronic readings. In Gen 17, God reveals himself as El Shaddai to Abraham and enters into a covenant with him promising progeny, land, and blessing. These promises are themes that are particularly meaningful after the deportations began in Israel 735 BCE. Landlessness, barrenness, and economic instability became part of the Israelite experience. Genesis 17 is able to be metaphorized, symbolized, and reflexively read to speak into the trauma of the multiple deportations and destructions that took place in Israel. Genesis 23 is another non-typical narrative that is included as part of the Priestly source. This is the story of Abraham purchasing the cave of Machpelah from Ephron, a son of Heth, in order to bury his wife Sarah. There are several elements in this story that touch on trauma, and particularly the Israelite experience of life outside of the land of Israel. Of particular note is the importance of the cave of Machpelah as an ancestral burial site. There also seems to be an ethic for Israelite burial and negotiation practices. Furthermore, the theme of family burial is explored through Abraham's experience as a foreigner. In this thesis, I show how the themes in these two pericopes are informed by, and speak to, Israelite experiences of trauma.

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Dedicated to the memory of my father, Troy,

and my brother, Joseph.

For my wife, Claire.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The *DSM-5* defines *trauma* as exposure to a traumatic event wherein one experiences "actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence."[1] This definition is hotly debated for its sufficiency.[2] However, this definition is given in the *DSM-5* for the purpose of diagnosing patients to allow medical practitioners help individuals recover from their experience of trauma. In the case of this thesis, using the language and definitions and psychology of trauma is anachronistic when using it to describe phenomena from the ANE, as humans from the Iron Age did not have a definition of trauma from the *DSM-5*. However, in this thesis, I will attempt to navigate the dangers of anachronism by combining the disciplines of trauma theory and literary theory as it relates to the Priestly material in Gen 17 and 23. The experience of trauma is present throughout the Hebrew Bible. The trauma that is experienced, rehearsed, and described in the Hebrew Bible includes the experience of military campaigns and sieges, widespread death, personal injury and sexual violence, and also forced migration in both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms. Trauma theory will be employed in the examination of these texts to illuminate how these stories function as "screen memories"

1. American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-5* (Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Association, 2013), 271.

2. Laura K. Jones and Jenny L. Cureton, "Trauma Redefined in the DSM-5: Rationale and Implications for Counseling Practice," https://tpcjournal.nbcc.org/trauma-redefined-in-the-dsm-5-rationale-and-implications-for-counseling-practice/.

for the violent experience of multiple deportations and forced migrations.[3] According to Freud, screen memories allow a patient to cope with a traumatic event through the creation of a narrative memory that both speaks to and also obscures the traumatic event.[4]

In this chapter, I will attempt to bring together multiple disciplines and areas of research for this thesis. These areas of study are trauma, memory, literary criticism, redaction criticism, and historical criticism. The synthesis of these disciplines is quite natural in my opinion and can basically be summarized thus: The biblical accounts in Gen 17 and 23, as I will show, both reflect upon and are informed by the experiences of the traumas that took place for the populations living in and around the borders of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah from the ninth century forward. Trauma and memory studies inform this project by showing that there are responses to trauma that are both conscious and unconscious. Recovery from experiences of trauma often takes place through the creation of narratives that explain and incorporate the trauma into a larger corporate narrative. Much of the Hebrew Bible represents this kind of reassociation with the trauma through the creation of a narrative that explains why the multiple destructions and exiles took place. Genesis seems to show an awareness of these kinds of events, but it is not necessary to date Genesis to the exilic or the post-exilic period because this text displays an awareness of exile. The historical-critical method is also important because any conversation about Genesis brings up the relationship between the different layers of the text. The historical-critical method is also crucial when the subject matter is the text's relationship to the historical traumas of the ninth through the sixth centuries. And lastly

3. Sigmund Freud, "Screen Memories," *Sigmund Freud: The Collected Works,* ed. Alix Strachey and James Strachey (London, UK: Hogarth Press, 1899), 43–63.

4. Freud, "Screen Memories," 44.

the discipline of literary criticism is helpful because the object of study is a text that has and uses literary conventions, and so makes claims not only about the realities of the setting in which it was written, but also about the past and future to some extent. The text raises and answers questions deemed important for an implied audience. As such this multidisciplinary approach to the texts of Gen 17 and 23 is helpful in understanding the meanings of these texts for their ancient implied audience, as well as for readers today.

Trauma studies began as a formal discipline of study in the twentieth century. Numerous global atrocities, both natural and human-made, were on display before the world, and it is out of the context of war that this development took place. Genocides and earthquakes could be reported on across the entire world. And so, the experience of war was for the first time a global event. Naturally, the study of trauma arose in the period where encountering persons who had endured trauma was not only common but widespread. The term "shell shock" was coined in 1915 by Charles Myer to describe soldiers who were suffering from an inability to function with symptoms of crying and shaking and flashbacks.[5] As people returned to the normal responsibilities of life after a period of intensity, it was noted that the events that were experienced were not easily compartmentalized and left behind, but the trauma continued with them in the form of flashbacks, disassociation, numbness, bursts of anger, inability to form attachments, etc.[6]

5. Steven Joseph, "What Doesn't Kill Us," *Psychology Today,* 20 November 2011, https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/what-doesnt-kill-us/201111/is-shell-shock-the-same-ptsd.

6. Bessel Van Der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score* (New York: Penguin Books, 2014), 14.

Collective Memory and Trauma

Trauma is often described today in its individual dimensions.[7] One framework for approaching and thinking about trauma is that narrative plays a tremendous role in an individual's experience of trauma. Trauma fractures an individual's conception of the self and life-story. The therapeutic goal for recovering from trauma is the constructive process of including and integrating the traumatic event into the life narrative. In an event where an individual is devalued and made to feel meaningless through violence or disaster, the task for recovery is to make meaning of one's experience in the wake of trauma. Collective trauma and individual trauma are not easily bifurcated. There is carry over, as collective trauma includes individuals, and individuals rarely exist outside of a community. However, in regards to Gen 17 and 23, I am not able to diagnose Abraham with PTSD, although previous attempts have been made to diagnose other biblical characters. I am instead interested in the ways that the stories in Gen 17 and 23 speak out of the collective memories of trauma.

Since there are layers to the trauma within the text that I will be exploring, I believe that it is helpful to lay out the different layers of the influence of trauma. While the trauma that I was describing earlier was individualized, and much of the research done in that area consists of the experiences of survivors of war and domestic and sexual abuse and their recovery, what I am now describing has implications for the individual dimensions of recovery, but the scale is much larger. The questions I will seek to answer here are: What is cultural trauma? How do communities respond to cultural trauma, and

7. For a fuller description of the dimensions to individual trauma, please see Appendix.

what is the role of memory in that response? Answering these questions in full would require a separate thesis, so I will only briefly survey the research that has been done.

There have been studies on the continuing effects of genocide in people groups who have suffered. The further away from the case of genocide, the more data can be collected as to how the generations that come after the immediate survivors continue to be affected by the tragedy, and also how they remember the events that took place. The Turkish genocide of the Armenians is such an example. In 1915, Turkish forces attempted to systematically exterminate the population of Armenians living within Turkey. By 1916, official German reports stated that 1.5 million Armenians had been killed, 80–90% of the total Armenian population in Turkey.[8] This is only an estimate, however, and there were further massacres, which continued until 1923.[9] The Turkish government has since denied the genocide.

The survivors of the genocide scattered across the world to whatever nations would accept them as refugees. For those who settled outside of the Middle East, they were most likely the first and only Armenians to settle in a given location.[10] In the United States, the Armenian immigrants were impoverished and traumatized and also in a place where the local population was unfamiliar with Armenian culture.[11]

8. Diane Kupelian, Anie Sanentz Kalayjian, and Alice Kassabian, "The Turkish Genocide of the Armenians: Continuing Effects on Survivors and Their Families Eight Decades After Massive Trauma," in *International Handbook of Multigenerational Legacies of Trauma,* ed. Yael Danieli (New York: Plenum Press, 1998), 192.

9. Kupelian, "Turkish," 192.

10. Kupelian, "Turkish," 193.

11. Kupelian, "Turkish," 193.

The reactions of the Armenian communities to the genocide of their people resemble the reactions of Jewish communities after World War II.[12] The obliterative trauma that both peoples suffered has created parallels in both surviving communities. Symptoms of survivors of both peoples, but of the Armenians in particular, included anxiety, depression, compulsive associations to trauma-related material, guilt, nightmares, irritability, anhedonia, emptiness, and a fear of attachment and intimacy. However, survivors were not the only ones who were affected by the genocide. There were intergenerational consequences found as a result of the study. For instance, when the second and third generations of survivors were asked if they felt different from other people because of the experience of their parents/grandparents, both generations answered affirmatively.[13] Many, but not all, children of survivors suffer these symptoms as pathological consequences.[14] Heuristic explanations for the children's symptoms have been given, for example, that the children's behavior originates in symbolic relationships to their parent's trauma or that their behaviors are shaped by their own parent's pathogenic behaviors.[15]

Along with trauma-related behavior, social and family structures are changed according to the trauma. The families throughout the generations remain extremely tight-knit.[16] There remains in the third generation a strong commitment to the Armenian ethnic

12. See Zahava Solomon, "Transgenerational Effects of the Holocaust: The Israeli Research Perspective," in *International Handbook of Multigenerational Legacies of Trauma*, ed. Yael Danieli (New York: Plenum Press, 1998), 79–80.

13. Kupelian, "Turkish," 200.

14.Kupelian, "Turkish," 203.

15. Kupelian, "Turkish," 203.

16. Kupelian, "Turkish," 198.

identity through participation in community life events with the most significant being important religious days and practices and annual memorial services mourning the genocide.[17] Armenian church services provide a source of social cohesion for the families that brings together the many spheres of their experience. The example given from the Armenian families as well as other studies on people groups and the multigenerational effects of trauma are helpful, albeit limited, in preparation for understanding the texts that I will explore later.

J. C. Alexander defines *cultural trauma* as "acute discomfort entering into the core of the collectivity's sense of its own identity."[18] He also states more fully, "Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways."[19] These acute moments of societal trauma are described by Alexander as moments of "cultural crisis."[20] Recovery for Alexander is not deliberate and active social construction which communities undergo when they undergo a painful experience.[21] Instead, Alexander describes the process of recovery from a cultural experience of trauma as defining a painful experience as a cultural crisis and then redefining the communal identity. The redefinition is described by Alexander as "cultural work."[22] This work

17. Kupelian, "Turkish," 199.

18. Jeffrey Alexander, *Trauma: A Social Theory* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2012), 15.

19. Jeffrey Alexander, "Cultural Trauma, Morality and Solidarity: The Social Construction of 'Holocaust' and Other Mass Murders," *Thesis Eleven* 132:1 2016, 3–16.

20. Alexander, *Trauma,* 15.

21. Alexander, *Trauma,* 4.

22. Alexander*, Trauma,* 4.

consists of "rituals, speeches, marches, meetings, plays, movies, and storytelling of all kinds."[23] It also requires communal representatives of the trauma process who pay special attention to calling the attention of the community to the trauma, a new metanarrative that incorporates the trauma, and institutions in which the new narrative can be supported and developed.[24] These representatives are described as actors or "carrier groups," who do the work to bridge the divide between event and representation.[25] In the case of Genesis, there are several potential carrier groups: the author(s) of chapter 17 and 23, the editor, and the cult whose interests are represented by P. The bridging of this divide is what Alexander describes as the "trauma process."[26] The trauma process describes the event suffered, but it can also condense serious levels of suffering into a flattened cause and effect framework due to the structure of narratives.[27] The emotional impact of suffering is expressed more fully in genres besides narrative, such as poetry and in art, yet the narrative construction process plays a tremendous role in integrating the trauma into the life of the community.

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23. Alexander, *Trauma,* 4.

24. Alexander, *Trauma,* 15.

25. Alexander, *Trauma*, 15. For the concept of "carrier groups" see Max Weber, *Economy and Society,* trans. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978), 468–517. Weber defines carrier groups sociologically. They are meaning-making agents of their society and represent various positions within their society. The contents of their interpretation include religion and trauma. These groups can exist at different levels of the economic scale and have their own interests. As such, the groups can be made up of members of marginalized groups, elite social circles, established institutions, different generations, etc. Regardless of which class and group the carrier group represents, they share the discursive ability to make meaning of their trauma for the rest of their society.

26. Alexander, *Trauma*, 15.

27. Kathleen O'Connor, "How Trauma Studies Can Contribute to Old Testament Studies," in *Trauma and Traumatization in Individual and Collective Dimensions: Insights from Biblical Studies and Beyond*, vol. 2, eds. Eve-Marie Becker, Ole Davidsen, Jan Dochhorn, Kasper Bro Larsen, and Nils Arne Pedersen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 213.

Narratives are performative in their function. Claims about the trauma are persuasively argued to and for the community/audience, including details about the historical circumstances of the trauma along with the symbols that are currently in circulation.[28] The trauma narrative is first performed for the members of the carrier group, and if it is successful in persuasion, the carrier group then goes from being the audience to being performers themselves.[29] Success is measured by the adoption of the performance by the carrier groups who then distill and reinterpret the performance.

In bridging the gap between event and representation, there is what Kenneth Thompson has identified as a "spiral of signification."[30] The spiral of signification describes the creation of a framework that incorporates symbols that must be tested as persuasive by the community. The community does not unanimously agree that this symbolic framework is always convincing, so the new narrative that is created is dynamic in how it convinces and persuades the audience that they have all been traumatized.[31]

According to Alexander, there are four major questions that must be answered by the creation of a persuasive metanarrative that creates a cohesive group understanding of the trauma. The first is the nature of the trauma. In other words, what are the details surrounding the event that will be interpreted as traumatic? What has been suffered? Second, the nature of the victim must be described. Who has been affected? Were they members of a single ethnic, geographic, or religious group, or was the trauma widespread? The third question identifies the relationship between the victim of trauma

28. Alexander, *Trauma*, 16.

29. Alexander, *Trauma,* 16.

30. Kenneth Thompson, *Moral Panics* (London: Routledge, 1998), 20–24.

31. Alexander, *Trauma*, 17.

and the wider audience. This question focuses on the extent to which the audience of the representations are able to share in identification with the traumatized victims. This question also explores the symbolic function of trauma in a community. For instance, how do geographically isolated pockets of Christians being persecuted create a widespread narrative that Christians are persecuted even when many do not share the trauma of those who are actually persecuted. And finally, the last question to be answered is that of responsibility. Providing an answer in the narrative for who is to be held responsible for the trauma is essential, even if the answer functions symbolically.[32] In the case of the Armenian genocide, was it the Turkish government that was to be held responsible? Was it the officers and/or the soldiers? Was it the Muslim population as a whole? And how did the experience of a world war affect the expectations for responsible parties?

Another way to describe this process follows Norman Freedman moving from "desymbolization" back towards symbolization.[33] Freedman is a psychoanalyst who describes how trauma causes ideas to become "desymbolized" when their symbolic function ceases to be useful in the aftermath of trauma. The constructive process sources both new and old symbols that can function with the reality of trauma. Freedman describes this process as a survival mechanism for the traumatized.[34] Desymbolization and re-symbolization allow the community to deal with their suffering together in a way

32. Alexander, *Trauma,* 19.

33. Richard Lasky, "Introduction," in *Symbolization and Resymbolization: Essays in Honor of Norbert Freedman,* ed. Richard Lasky (New York: Karnac, 2002), 19–20. See also Doris Silverman, "The Refractoriness of the Desymbolizing Function," in *Symbolization and Resymbolization: Essays in Honor of Norbert Freedman,* ed. Richard Lasky (New York: Karnac, 2002), 230–51.

34. Lasky, "Introduction," 19–20.

that moves through the fragmented survival space of immediate trauma, remembering and bearing witness to the trauma as a community, while evaluating reflexively the assumptions and narratives that existed before the trauma, and keeping and changing those symbols and narratives as they explain and fit the new narrative of trauma. As O'Connor has shown, attention to this set of issues is very helpful for biblical studies.[35]

Trauma has an exclusivizing effect on groups of people.[36] There are incredible bonds between individuals who have experienced the same events and come through it. There is, in a sense, a camaraderie in the trauma to which those outside the group of the traumatized are unable to share.[37] For example, Shoshana Felman describes a married couple who survived the Holocaust and remained married despite incompatibility because, "he knew who I was—He was the only person who knew . . . and I knew who he was."[38] Similarly, American survivors of the Iranian hostage crisis said at a reunion, "It is easy to be together. We don't have to explain things. We carry the same pain."[39]

It is true that trauma isolates individuals, but in the case of communities that suffer together, it also forms the foundation for communities. The process for recovery is thus undertaken together. Sacred traditions are infused with the experience of trauma and take on new meanings for the traumatized group. The traditions and rituals that formed the framework of the community before are scrutinized and changed in order to escape

35. O'Connor, "Trauma Studies," 213.

36. Kai Erikson, "Notes on Trauma and Community," in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1995),183–99.

37. Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University, T58. Quoted in Shoshana Felman, "Education and Crisis, or the Vicissitudes of Teaching," in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory,* 186.

38. Felman, "Education," 186.

39. Felman, "Education," 186.

from, address, bear witness to, and remember the trauma that has been suffered.[40] The community that existed before the trauma no longer exists. This awareness of change in the community, indeed, is part of the trauma, and the community that survives the trauma reflexively interprets its narrative and story through the lens of the traumatic experiences.[41] An important part of the self has died, and the new part must be created.

Along with trauma studies, memory studies are growing in their use in dialogue with biblical studies and the Hebrew Bible in particular. Memory and the study of its relationship with history is not a separate field from the study of trauma. At the center of these explorations in memory and history is the question, "What is the past, and how do we have access to it?"[42] This is the central question, and it is answered with radically opposite solutions. For instance, Halbwachs asserts, "History can present itself as the universal memory of mankind. But there is no universal memory. Every shared memory is held up by a group restricted in space and time."[43] This anti-positivist view of history is common in recent studies, especially in historical Egyptian studies. Colleen Manassa and Roberto Gozzoli are examples of this approach.[44]

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40. Felman, "Education," 187.

41. Felman, "Education," 187.

42. Hans Barstad, "History and Memory: Some Reflections on The 'Memory Debate' in Relation to The Hebrew Bible," in *The Historian and the Bible: Essays in Honour of Lester L. Grabbe*, eds. Philip R. Davies and Diana V. Edelman, LHBOTS 530 (New York: T. & T. Clark, 2010), 7.

43. Barstad, "History," 6. See also Jan Assman, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination,* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 180–85. Maurice Halbwachs, *La mémoire collective Édition critique établie par G. Namer Préparée avec la collaboration de M. Jaisson,* new and expanded ed., Bibliothèque de L'Evolution de l'Humanité (Paris, France: Albin Michel, 1997), 97–142.

44. See Colleen Manassa, *The Great Karnak Inscription of Merneptah: Grand Strategy in the 13th Century B.C.,* Yale Egyptological Studies 5 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003); and Roberto Gozzoli, *The Writing of History in Ancient Egypt During the First Millennium BC (ca. 1070–180 BC): Trends and Perspectives* (London: Golden House, 2006).

Anti-positivist views of history are not the only views, though, and Assmann reacts against Halbwachs stating that, "the distinction between 'memory' and 'history,' as Halbwachs sees it, is now no longer accepted and historiography is classified rather as a particular kind of social memory."[45] There is a growing awareness that history and memory are not easily separated, but also that the historian's search for "what really happened" still matters.

The influence of memory studies on Egyptology in the case of Assmann and Halbwachs has implications for biblical studies and particularly investigations into the Iron Age and Persian periods. In particular, the narratives in Genesis have been understood as a "means of creating and sustaining identity" and not as "history." In this sense, Van Seters has argued that narratives reflect the period of their composition, while others such as Thompson have argued that the narratives within the Pentateuch do not represent any real historical context.[46] John Van Seters places much of the composition of the Pentateuch in the exilic period, just as much earlier, Gressmann maintained that the patriarch narratives were ahistorical constructions.[47]

Trauma studies can aid, and also complexify, the discussion of memory and history, in the sense that traumatic memories are not necessarily historical, but they are often accurate. They are personal and fragmented, iterative and irregular. This assumes, however, that there is a traumatic memory behind the text. This puts me at odds with

45. Barstad, "History and Memory," 4.

46. Thomas Thompson, "Reiterative Narratives of Exile and Return: Virtual Memories of Abraham in the Persian and Hellenistic Periods," in *The Historian and The Bible: Essays in Honour of Lester L. Grabbe*, eds. Philip R. Davies, Diana V. Edelman, LHBOTS 530 (New York: T & T Clark, 2010), 46.

47. See Hugo Gressmann, "Sage und Geschichte in den Patriarchenerzählungen," *ZAW* 30 (1910), 1–34.

Thompson and Gressmann and more in agreement with Van Seters. However, there is a significant difference in treating the texts as documents that are concerned with creating and sustaining identity, rather than documents that struggle to understand and reshape an identity that is already exist. Traumatic memories are complex in their relationship to personal history. The history that is represented in trauma narratives may not speak directly about the historical circumstances behind the trauma. Instead of a simplistic rehearsal of the traumatic events, trauma narratives often bear testimony against the trauma and interpret the whole experience.

The Role of Narratives in Response to Trauma

Narratives play an essential role in the creation of the new identity of the group. Sometimes entire narratives are discarded because they are insufficient in the wake of trauma to explain the trauma. Other times old narratives are resymbolized and become reflexive stories that carry images, themes, and metaphors that contain meaning for and bind together traumatized communities.[48] Kathleen O'Connor describes the role of narrative texts (Jeremiah in particular) in the resymbolization of reality with her own acronym, PTLI, which stands for "post-traumatic literary intervention."[49] Freedman had earlier created a three-part framework that describes ways in which literature helps readers cope with disaster: Incipient Symbol-Making, Discursive Symbol-Making, and Dynamic Symbol-Making.[50] Freedman uses these in regards to the psychological health of individuals, so there is a reasonable argument to be had as to whether these processes

48. O'Connor, "Trauma Studies," 213.

49. O'Connor, "Trauma Studies," 213.

50. J. Schimek, "Some Thoughts on Symbolization and Transference," in *Symbolization and Resymbolization: Essays in Honor of Norbert Freedman,* ed. Richard Lasky (New York: Karnac, 2002), 255.

can be applied to ancient community texts. Texts like Jeremiah use preexisting symbolic language and also create symbolic language to describe the disaster, to give explanations for the disaster, and to speak about a future beyond the disaster.[51]

Incipient Symbol-Making is the language that is used to speak about the unspeakable after reality has become fragmented and de-symbolized by trauma. It is language that is dialectical in its function. As such, this language is not a literal description of the disaster suffered, as this would cause the trauma to be relived by the survivors and would be overwhelming. It does not aid in establishing safety for the survivors when the reality is still too dangerous to deal with directly. Instead, the language uses images and metaphors to allude to and evoke feelings, moods, and themes that are gentler than reality.[52]

My argument will show that the Abrahamic narratives were sources for the images, moods, and themes that the traumatized community found helpful to read reflexively. Genesis is a book that describes violence and trauma in almost every chapter. As such, these stories have preexisting forms that are not necessarily related to the disasters of the eighth through the sixth centuries, but those stories were re-symbolized and provided language that was used to make meaning out of the disasters.[53]

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51. See Kathleen O'Connor, *Jeremiah: Pain and Promise,* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2011).

52. Freedman thus stands in contrast to Cathy Caruth and Van der Kolk, who work to reconstruct the trauma and integrate it. However, there seems to be a shared emphasis on approaching trauma from a safe distance.

53. For a general commentary on Genesis that includes elements of trauma theory, see Kathleen O'Connor, *Genesis* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2018).

Discursive Symbol-Making is the second phase described by Freedman, and it is in this phase that survivors create coherent narratives.[54] These narratives answer the questions of why and how the trauma was suffered. They provide the reasons for suffering by accusing perpetrators and delineating responsibility. Once survivors have moved through the steps of establishing safety and coming to grips with their trauma through realization, this next step is the interpretation of their traumatic experiences. Questions such as these become important reflections for surviving communities, such as the Armenians discussed above: Why did this happen? How did this happen? Who is responsible? The answers at which communities arrive for these questions are not necessarily whole, good, or just. The rise of the Third Reich in Germany is one such example of a country that faced the disaster and trauma of World War I and went through the process of discursive symbol-making in such a way that the narratives and answers that were provided were as harmful, or more harmful, than the original trauma. However, studies indicate that even wrong and self-blaming narratives indicate a better long-term survival among individual rape and cancer survivors than having no narrative.[55] Narratives function in a sort of feedback loop of establishing safety, providing a framework for remembrance and mourning, and then finally reconnecting or reassociating. Narratives speak into each aspect of the process, and are themselves shaped by the process.

The destruction of Israel and the eventual sacking of Jerusalem that led to forced migrations and deportations are studied through archaeological evidence, but as this

54. O'Connor, "Trauma Studies," 215.

55. Romie Janoff-Bulmann, *Shattered Assumptions: Toward a New Psychology of Trauma* (New York: Free Press, 1992), 95–97.

thesis will show, the disasters of the eighth through sixth centuries are best known through the influence that they had on the literature that was generated, produced, and edited during this period. However, Genesis is not equivalent in function to Granofsky's *trauma novel,* which Granofsky argues is a new distinct sub-genre of fiction that symbolically deals with contemporary traumas through fiction. Genesis does not fit into Granofsky's subgenre because the narrative does not solely address the traumas of the Jewish people and also because Genesis utilizes symbols that were already established in oral, cultic, and cultural settings.[56] The symbolic world pre-existed the trauma to a somewhat unknown extent and provided a backdrop and foundation for the interpretation of the traumatic events. These answers that Genesis provides to its own questions are preserved, combined, and interpreted by communities that experienced trauma and used to reorient the community towards their trauma.

There are also within Gen 17 and 23 examples of Freedman's final symbol-making phase, which he describes as Dynamic Symbolization.[57] This phase is descriptive of the survivor's capacity to imagine a future beyond disaster. The concern is no longer just survival, and the requirements for flourishing begin to be explored. In the texts that I will be dealing with, the covenantal status of Ishmael and other descendants of Abraham and the fulfillment of the promise of land are imperative theological questions regarding the future of a people suffering the destruction of their world. Genesis provides the theological foundation for Israel as they experience the realities of forced migrations, separated families, and societal upheaval. Genesis is itself affected by these realities and

56. Theodore Hiebert, *The Yahwist's Landscape: Nature and Religion in Early Israel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 27.

57. Lasky, "Introduction," 22.

shows signs of being resymbolized in the editing and composition of its structure and narratives.

This has several meaningful implications which will be explored later. However, studying ancient community-centered texts such as Genesis through the lens of trauma studies can help modern readers better understand the violence and suffering that is both in and behind Genesis. Along the same lines, reading Genesis through the lens of trauma allows for the communal aspect of the text to shine through in the ways that the text interfaces with community life with both text and community being changed in the process. The symbolic world that the narrative creates for the community is a frame that both is informed by trauma and helps the community endure and reflect upon further trauma.

Trauma and Abraham

Having described trauma theory and its function both individually and sociologically, I now need to describe how trauma theory can be helpful in reading the Abraham narrative from Gen 11–25, particularly Gen 17 and 23. I will provide my own estimate for the date of composition of these texts. Furthermore, there are major difficulties in understanding the nature of P's function. Whether it was a redactional layer, or whether it existed independently of the other narratives is impossible to know with any degree of certainty. However, in the next chapter I will briefly parse out the Priestly source, and provide my own estimate for the potential date of the material.

Gen 17 and 23 represent two of the longest narratives within P. There are difficulties with determining whether these two chapters even belong to the same author/authors, but they both contribute to the larger P narrative in major ways. Chapter 17 describes the covenant that God makes with Abraham. The covenant obligations and

the basic promises of a son, blessing, and land are laid out. Genesis 23 is a very different narrative because it includes no explicit covenantal language. Chapter 23 describes Abraham's purchase of the cave of Machpelah from Ephron the Hittite for the purpose of burying Sarah. Both of these pericopes are lengthy for the Priestly source, which is extremely concise and measured in the words that are used. The reason for including these lengthy treatments of the covenant and of a burial plot are important for P's narrative. Both of these texts speak on the themes of the proper relationship between Israelites and non-Israelites. In Gen 17, there is ambiguity regarding the inclusion of Ishmael into the covenant and also insistence that Abraham and Sarah would have a son. In Gen 23, Abraham interacts with a son of Heth and plays the game of social negotiation. The issue of foreign policy and social etiquette towards non-Israelites was ongoing, but became particularly acute during the period of multiple forced migrations that began in the eighth century.

However, it is not necessary to date P to show that the concerns of the Priestly authors were in response to these deportations. Even a date for P in the monarchic period does not preclude understanding the Abrahamic narrative to be a trauma narrative. An early date for the Priestly material does not exclude the importance of covenant and circumcision as cultic concerns for Israelites suffering and threatened by attack from the empires that surrounded them. Avi Hurvitz has, for instance, argued that the Hebrew of P predates both Ezekiel and Deuteronomy.[58] As such, the dating for the Priestly material does not necessarily need to be post-586 B.C., and it certainly does not need to have

58. See Avi Hurvitz, "Once Again: The Linguistic Profile of the Priestly Material in the Pentateuch and Its Historical Age. A Response to J. Blenkinsopp," *ZAW* 112 (2000), 180–91.

originally been composed after the fall of the Babylonian Empire in 539. If, on the other hand, the Priestly material were indeed postexilic, that fact would also allow Gen 17 and 23 to function as trauma literature. Precise dating is not necessary to prove the thesis that these chapters functioned as responses to the trauma of exile.

Finally, I want to briefly sketch some themes and concerns that Genesis contains that would have been of the utmost importance for the Israelites as early as the eighth century, as well as later. The first has to do with the structure of Genesis itself. Structure is not easily separated or distinct from content, but it is the backbone of the narrative. The *tôlĕdôt* formula is an important symbol for the representation of the Israelites. The *tôlĕdôt* formula occurs ten separate times, with an extra occurrence with the same reference in 36.[59] In every instance, the *tôlĕdôt* formula introduces genealogies and narratives. It is debated whether the *tôlĕdôt* formula carries the same meaning in every instance it is used, and so it is debated whether this is indeed the structure for dividing the book. Whybray does not recognize the *tôlĕdôt* formula as a key structural element for the book for this very reason.[60] I agree, however, with Ska that the *tôlĕdôt* formula does carry the same meaning at the "concrete" level, which is in its use.[61] Ska means here that there indeed are different lexical definitions and meanings, but overall each use of the *tôlĕdôt* formula functions to mean "the engenderment of . . ."[62] This designation marks a transitional, or introductory, rather than concluding phrase. He makes the important point that each of

59. Genesis 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 11:27; 25:12, 19; 36:1, 9; and 37:2.

60. Jean-Louis Ska, *Introduction to Reading the Pentateuch* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 20. See also Roger Whybray, *Introduction to The Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995), 23–24.

61. Ska, *Introduction*, 20.

62. Ska, *Introduction*, 20.

the usages of the *tôlĕdôt* introduces either a narration or a genealogy. For example, Gen 2:4 is not the *story* of heaven and earth, but what is *engendered* by heaven and earth.[63] Every time the *tôlĕdôt* formula is used, it is followed by the genitor and not the person being engendered.[64] It thus serves to introduce the creation narrative of chapter two, and not conclude the non-P creation narrative of chapter one.

The *tôlĕdôt* is used intentionally to bridge the gap between events of the overarching narrative of Genesis. From Creation to Joseph, they are held together by the *tôlĕdôt.* This is also true of the origins and the ancestors, which may not seem to be bridged by the *tôlĕdôt* at first glance. However, Gen 9:20–11:26 and the narratives within bridge the story of the origins of the cosmos and humanity to the story of the patriarchs of Israel. This is accomplished in Gen 9:26–11:26 through the distinction of ante/post-diluvian eras. The concern here is about the relationship between Israel and their neighbors. The blessing of Shem and the cursing of Ham, as well as the Tower of Babel, serve to distinguish the most ancient ancestors of neighboring peoples from the ancestors of Israel and the special call given to Abram. The ante-/post-diluvian separation divides Genesis roughly into two parts: Gen 1–9 and 10–50.[65]

Beginning in chapter 10 and continuing through chapter 50, the concerns of the text shift from questions of the origin of the cosmos and humanity to questions specific to Israel, the land, and God. God's concern becomes limited to the family of Abram and his descendants. There is continuity and repetition through reaffirmation of God's

63. Ska, *Introduction*, 20.

64. Ska, *Introduction*, 20.

65. Ska, *Introduction*, 21.

relationship to the patriarchs as the story unfolds. God reveals himself to Jacob as the God of his fathers, Abraham and Isaac, and repeats the promise of multiplication of offspring and inheritance of the land. God promises and shows the land to Abraham, and he promises it to Isaac. God makes Jacob return to the land after his exile with Laban and conflict with Esau, and promises to bring the descendants who immigrated to Egypt back to the land, a move that is then continued in the Exodus story.

The narrative progression in Gen 10 to 50 seems to indicate that the major question concerns the chosen inheritors of God's promises. This question is answered by God taking notice of Noah against the backdrop of the entirely wicked population in the antediluvian period. Noah is exclusively chosen by God. but the question of the identity of the chosen is answered differently in the postdiluvian narrative. All peoples descend from Noah, but blessing functions at the macro-level for entire people groups (as well as for the Sabbath and for animals in the creation story), while the blessing itself is given on the micro-level exclusively to individuals. For instance, Abram, and not Nahor, Haran, Eliezer, or Lot, is called by God (although the major competitive relationship between kin in Gen 12–25 is the relationship between Lot and Abram and not Abram's extended kin). This relationship results in the descendants of Abram being chosen as the inheritors of the blessing and not the neighboring Moabites or the Ammonites. Isaac is chosen instead of Ishmael, which I will deal with in greater depth. In the same way, Jacob is the inheritor of the blessing and not Esau. This blessing is given to individuals, but it has major implications for the blessing of the generations that follow. The Israelites, not their neighbors the Edomites, inherit the blessing. The text shows concern for the relationship between Israel and their neighbors. The Joseph narrative also provides a complex view of

the inclusion of Ephraim and Manasseh with Jacob's other sons in the blessing.[66] The narratives in Genesis describe familial conflicts and reconciliations. The narratives move through these conflicts with great complexity and deftness. They also move through similar complex relationships with other people groups and tribes that dwell in and compete for land and resources.

The *tôlĕdôt* formulas answer the question concerning who inherits the blessing in the absence of a full narrative. Genesis 11:10–32 answers this question by focusing on the development of the single line of people from Shem to Abraham, Nahor, and Haran/Lot. As part of P's historiographical framework, the passage both introduces and sets up the distinctive call that Abram receives in 12:1, but also describes the locations in which descendants settled. The *tôlĕdôt* functions in a similar manner in Gen 25, with the descendants of Isaac, Ishmael, and the introduction of the stories of Jacob and Esau in 25:19. The *tôlĕdôt* in v. 19 introduces the J source narrative that follows, which is concerned with the proper inheritor.

Genesis shows an awareness of the concerns of later generations. In particular, the major questions in the text are *who* is the proper inheritor of the land, and will they indeed live in the land. The stories that occur in Gen 12–50 describe a family whose children have competing claims to the inheritance, and who then live outside of the land. These questions are being raised by the structure of the book of Genesis itself. They are not the only questions in the book, but it is my argument that these questions are important for the book as a whole. The Genesis material was brought together during the period of multiple exiles. During this lengthy period there were incursions into Israel and

66. Ska, *Introduction*, 25.

forced migrations of Israelites, which led to instability within the regions of Israel and Judah. The questions of land, inheritance, and covenant are a relevant lens through which traumatic events are understood. These concerns are, perhaps, why these narratives have staying power.

In this chapter, I have sought to pull multiple threads together. The pericopes of interest are Gen 17 and 23 and how they are aware of the political and social trauma of exile, and seek to respond to and speak about the realities that the trauma of exile brought into their lived experience. I have attempted to describe theories of individual and collective trauma responses, and how psychologists understand recovery from trauma as incorporation of the traumatic event into the individual and collective life story. There are then benefits of using methodologies from trauma theory to inform how we can perceive the Old Testament's function to help the people of Israel recover from and make meaning of the traumas that were experienced during the period of the exile and resettlement.

CHAPTER II

THE PRIESTLY LAYER OF GENESIS

I briefly outlined a history of Israel and Judah in chapter 1 to suggest that a late date for the Genesis material is not necessary in order for my argument to be coherent that Gen 17 and 23 can be read as traumatic texts. However, the function of a text is corollary to the history out of which it arises and the contexts in which it continues to be meaningful. In this chapter, therefore, I will attempt to deal with the Priestly material in Genesis in order to show how the P source material interacts with the J source material in these texts and also how these sections fit into the larger narrative of both the Priestly source and the canonical form of Genesis. The major question that needs to be explored is whether the Priestly source is a redactional layer or whether it was originally a separate account. The questions of source-criticism are important because they ask whose interests are being represented in Gen 17 and 23, and at what point in Israelite history did these texts which support various parties' interests come about. My simple answer to this question is that I believe P to have originally been a separate source from non-P but that there was a priestly redactor who was responsible for combining the materials. After exploring this topic I will then move onto the question of how P functions within Genesis by examining the structure that the genealogies provide to Genesis, and in particular, how the Abrahamic genealogies function within the larger context of the Genesis genealogies. I will describe the socio-historical context of P, and then describe how the *tôlĕdôt* formulas can be read through the lens of trauma.

The Priestly Layer: Redactional or Separate Source

The Priestly layer is perhaps the layer upon which there is the most agreement when it comes to the "transmission history" of Genesis.[1] The nature of the agreement is that the seams which separate P from non-P were some of the first observed and P is the most distinctive of the sources from the content surrounding it. Most of the discussions surrounding the Priestly source assume its existence but examine its historicity and function.[2]

Behind the Priestly source, there is disagreement about what can be known about the transmission history and transmission strategies, and there is also disagreement about what would be benefited if such things could be known with certainty.[3] It is not known how many successive revisions may have taken place in a single layer of the Genesis, much less the multiple strands together. The later strands are what I am primarily dealing with in this thesis because they can be spoken about with a greater degree of certainty than the earlier strands and are therefore less speculative, although it is important to admit that there is always speculation involved in reconstructing forms of the text that are not the present form.

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1. David Carr, *Reading the Fractures of Genesis: Historical and Literary Approaches* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 43. I am using the term "transmission history" that David Carr employed to describe the process of the transmission of written and oral materials instead of a specific focus on one or the other.

2. See John Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1975); Rolf Rendtorff, *The Problem of the Process of Transmission in the Pentateuch,* trans. J.J. Scullion, JSOTSup 89 (Sheffield, NY: JSOT Press, 1990), 136–70; Frank Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 290–325.

3. Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading,* Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985), 10–15.

Nineteenth and early twentieth century scholars were intent on finding the most ancient fragments of Genesis in order to reconstruct the history of Israelite religion.[4] Establishing the earliest fragments of Genesis has proven to be a difficult task because the transmission history is difficult to reconstruct when one has only the completed text.[5] Of course the final form of the text is slippery to define, and the existence of multiple canonical versions of the text raises the question of "which canon."[6] The approach to dating the sources has reversed in modern scholarship from the early German approach of starting with the earliest oral traditions to starting from the latest strands and working backwards.[7] I will not explore in this chapter the oral history or the tradition history of Genesis, except to note that it is there and it is much older than the written stages.[8] Instead, I will attempt to reconstruct the Priestly material because the dating of the text matters and the question of dating does reveal realities about trauma. However, in reconstructing I hope to show that the main argument of my thesis does not depend upon

4. For classic positions, see Johann Eichhorn, *Einleitung ins Alte Testament,* vol. 2 (Leipzig, Germany: Ben Weidmanns, Erben und Reich, 1781), 290–381; Julius Wellhausen, *Die Composition des Hexateuchs und der historischen Bücher des Alten Testaments* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1963); and Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1910); Martin Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions,* trans. B.W. Anderson (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981).

5. Jacob Licht, *Storytelling in the Bible* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1978), 146.

6. For differing canonical approaches, see Brevard Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1979); and James Sanders, *Canon and Community: A Guide to Canonical Criticism* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1984); see also John Barton, "Intertextuality and the 'Final Form' of the Text," *Congress Volume,* edited by Andre Lemaire and Magne Saebo, VTSup 80 (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 30–37.

7. Richard Hess, *Israelite Religions: An Archaeological and Biblical Survey,* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 45–59; For an exilic dating of J see John Van Seters, *Prologue to History*: *The Yahwist as Historian* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1992).

8. See Avi Hurvitz, "Once Again: The Linguistic Profile of the Priestly Material in the Pentateuch and Its Historical Age: A Response to J. Blenkinsopp," *ZAW* 112 (2000): 180–90; and also Avi Hurvitz, *A Linguistic Study of the Relationship Between the Priestly Source and the Book of Ezekiel: A New Approach to an Old Problem,* CahRB 20 (Paris: Gabalda, 1982).

the dating of the strata of either the J or the P source, because the period of the Northern/Southern split to the Post-exilic period was plagued with political instability, violence, and forced movements. As such, I am in agreement with the trend of reading Genesis both synchronically and diachronically.[9] The topic of exploration of this thesis is whether Gen 17 and 23 are traumatic stories and whether they reflect the traumatized identity of Israel and Judah. As such, an intratextual approach to the Priestly material in this chapter aids in answering questions of the relevance of trauma theory.

It is important to decide whether P is a redactional layer or a separate source, and whether P functions as a response to the non-priestly layers, as different answers to these two questions create implications for reading the narrative in Gen 17 and 23 on their own and with the rest of Genesis. The first criticism that is often brought forward against the Priestly layer being a separate source is that the Priestly source does not contain a complete narrative but rather relies on the J and E material for the progression of its own material. In this thesis, I am dealing with the only two narrative portions of the P source for the life of the patriarch Abraham. Genesis 17 describes the initiation of the covenant between God and Abraham, and Gen 23 describes Abraham's purchase of a burial site for Sarah. Chapter 23 is unique in its material, but the covenant details in chapter 17 are shared with the covenant texts in chapter 12 more generally and chapter 15 more particularly. This question matters for determining whether Gen 17 relies upon chapter 15, is aware of chapter 15, or was once a totally separate account from the other covenant text.

9. Carr, *Fractures,* 12–13.

In order to assess whether the Priestly layer is even capable of being a separate narrative, it will be helpful to sketch out the texts that make up the Priestly layer in Genesis.[10]As stated earlier, a helpful way of dividing the Priestly layer is by separating it into the ante-diluvian and postdiluvian material. The antediluvian material makes up the primeval history portion of the Priestly material, while the postdiluvian makes up the patriarchal history of the material. The antediluvian begins with creation. In the creation narrative of Gen 1, God establishes the state of the world by dividing his creation into its ordered parts.[11] Day and night, water above and below, land apart from the water, plants and animals according to their locomotion. The creation and blessing of humans is the climax through which it is possible to read the rest of the Priestly layer.[12] Gen 5–9, the flood narrative, is the next appearance of the Priestly material in a complex combination with non-P material. There is no priestly narrative that shifts the state of the world from Adam to Noah. Neither Cain nor Abel are listed as descendants of Adam, but Seth is made in the likeness of Adam as Adam was made in the likeness of God. The narrative is moved forward in P via genealogy: from creation to flood narrative.[13] Elohim uncreates and restores creation, and he establishes the first covenant with humanity, that it will not be destroyed again. In Gen 9, P develops its theology through legislation. For instance

10. Genesis 1 the beginning of the P narrative, but it is not clear where or how P ends in the rest of the Pentateuch. As such, dealing solely with the Priestly material in Genesis marks the boundaries of discussing P.

11. Joel Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch: Renewing the Documentary Hypothesis,* AYBRL, (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 2012)*,* 170; See also Edwin Firmage, "Genesis 1 and the Priestly Agenda," *JSOT* 82 (1999): 97–114.

12. Baden, *Composition,* 170; See also Walter Brueggeman, "The Kerygma of the Priestly Writers," *The Vitality of Old Testament Traditions* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox, 1982), 100–14.

13. Baden, *Composition,* 170.

food laws are introduced and murder is prohibited (9:5–6), which develops consistently P's anthropology between Gen 1 and 9.[14] The flood story is followed by the Table of Nations in Gen 10 which describes the multiplication of peoples across the world. The primeval history thus ends by describing the state of the world as it exists and the place of humans in it. P includes J material into the Table of Nations with verses 8–19 and 21, but the overall framing of the story is provided by P. The Priestly material moves from Noah to Abraham via a genealogy, and little is explained about Abraham until chapter 17. This section of P illustrates a gap and answers the question, how does Abram get to Canaan? The call of Abram takes place in the J source in chapter 12, but in chapter 17, it is assumed that Abram is already dwelling in the land (17:8). 12:4b–5 serves to move the narrative forward in P from Abraham in Harran to Canaan.[15] The travel reports in Genesis all share multiple vocabulary items and similar syntactical parallels that indicate common origins, and thus how 12:4b–5 is included into P without having many of the other distinctive features of P.[16]

There are only two major narratives that P describes from the life of Abraham. Genesis 17 and verses associated with 17 in chapters 16 and 21, and Gen 23.[17] Gen 17 is the patriarchal covenant narrative of P, and themes are carried and continued from the primeval history into the patriarchal history. In the primeval history God blesses all the nations, so in Gen 17, God blesses Abraham and his descendants through Sarah and

14. Jozef Jančovič, "Blood Revenge in Light of the Imago Dei in Genesis 9:6: Its Semantics and Pragmatics," *The Biblical Annals*, 10 no. 2 (2020): 191–206.

15. Other travel reports are found in Gen 36:6–7; 12:4b–5; 13:6; 31:17–18; and 46:5–7.

16. See David Carr, *Fractures*, 104–5; Baden, *Composition*, 170.

17. Gen 16:1, 3, 15–16; 21:2–5.

enters into a unique covenant with this family. The major parties, Abram and Sarai and God, are renamed and become Abraham and Sarah, and Elohim is revealed to them as El Shaddai.[18] In Gen 17, the themes of God's covenant with Abraham and Sarah's descendants and the promise of the land become important for the rest of the Priestly material. In 21:2–5 Isaac is born and then subsequently Sarah dies in 23. The promise of progeny is fulfilled and the promise of land is subsequently fulfilled in chapter 23 when Abraham purchases land in Canaan to bury Sarah.[19] The land becomes אֲחֻזַּת עוֹלָם and the divine promises are underway in their fulfillment. Abraham dies (25:7–10), and both of his sons bury him in the cave of Machpelah. The importance of land and progeny are featured in Abraham's death and are thematic in the Priestly narrative of Abraham's life.[20] Ishmael becomes the ancestor to multiple tribes (25:12–17). Isaac marries and has his children, Jacob and Esau (25:19–20, 26b); gains possessions (26:13–15, 18); and dies (35:27–29). The promise that God gave to Abraham and his descendants continues in P's account of Isaac's life, and the stories of Isaac and Abraham parallel one another, but the least attention is given to Isaac.[21]

There are more details provided for the narrative of Jacob's life. He is sent to Paddam-Aram to find a wife from within the family in opposition to Esau's marriage to

18. Interestingly, Ishmael is not renamed despite being blessed.

19. Baden, *Composition,* 171; See Gerhard Von Rad, "The Promised Land and Yahweh's Land in the Hexateuch," in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays,* trans. E. W. Trueman Dicken (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966); Lawrence Stager, "The Archaeology of the Family in Ancient Israel," *BASOR* 260 (1985): 1–35; Karel van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel: Continuity and Change in the Forms of Religious Life,* Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East 7 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 199.

20. Baden, *Composition,* 171.

21. Baden, *Composition,* 171.

Hittite women (26:34–35; 27:46; 28:1–9). Jacob becomes wealthy as well (30:43), and is married and has children (35:22b–26), and God affirms the blessing that was given to his grandfather in Gen 17 (35:11–12). Jacob's name is changed, like Abraham's, to Israel, which provides the nominal link of the twelve tribes to a single ancestor (35:10). Rachel dies (35:16a, 19), and their journey from Bethel to Ephrath is the reason given by P for why she is not also buried in the family plot.[22] The genealogies of Ishmael and Esau seem to serve the purpose of describing how the divine promise given to Abraham that he would be a father of many nations is fulfilled.

The Joseph narrative functions to conclude the patriarchal narratives and Jacob's narrative in particular. The list of Jacob's descendants in 46:8–27 is important in P along with moving the family to Egypt (48:3–7, 20).[23] Indeed the movement of the family to Egypt functions to fulfill the blessing in Gen 1 and 9 to go forth and multiply. Jacob insists that he too will be buried in Canaan (49:29–33), which does happen (50:12–13).

There is certainly continuity throughout P. The four major stories of creation, uncreation and recreation, covenant, and land anchor the rest of P through Genesis.[24] These themes are repeated and carried throughout P and its thematic coherence is observable. The claim that the Priestly material is dependent upon the non-priestly material for the continuation of its narrative does not seem justified. The themes of blessing and land and fulfillment of promise emerge in almost every piece of the P

22. Baden, *Composition,* 171.

23. Baden, *Composition,* 172.

24. Brueggeman, "Kerygma" 102.

material.[25] The primeval and the patriarchal narratives are begun and tied up. The patriarchs marry and have children, gain possessions and wealth, their children become leaders of tribes of peoples, and they die and are buried in the only legally owned property in the land of Canaan.[26] The Priestly material is sparing in its use of words, using much of the same vocabulary and syntax to describe the lives of the patriarchs, but it does so masterfully to communicate theological themes and ideas and its own narrative in a full sense. The Priestly material does not, in my view, lack a coherent narrative that must be dependent upon the J and E sources, but it tells its own story on its own terms. It only seems deficient when the canonical text is assumed and is the main driving force for the Genesis narrative.[27]

These texts make it possible, in my view, for the Priestly material in Genesis to have operated not just as a redactional layer, but as a separate worklayer. Moreover, it is the case that in all instances where separate texts have been interwoven together into a single unified document, there are edits and things cut out of the original documents. Therefore, it is possible that although there is enough Priestly material in Genesis to constitute a separate document, it is likely that if such a document were ever to have existed it would have more within it than what is represented in the Genesis narrative.[28]

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25. Baden, *Composition,* 172; See also Karl Elliger, "Sinn und Ursprung der priesterlichen Geschichtserzählung," *Zeitschrift fur Theologie und Kirche* 49 (1952), 124.

26. Baden, *Composition,* 172; See S. R. Driver, *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (New York: Meridian, 1957), 12; Joseph Carpenter and George Harford-Battersby, *The Hexateuch According to the Revised Version* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1900), 1:123,

27. Baden, *Composition,* 172.

28. Carr, *Fractures,* 114.

It is also my view that the P material was not originally intended to be read alongside non-P material. One major example of this is the progression of the revelation of the divine names (Gen 17:1; cf. Exod 6:2–3). This progression is totally contradicted in the canonical text. There is also poor coordination of the P material with the non-P material. Genesis 17; 27:46–28:9; 35:9–15 fit very disjointedly with their surrounding texts, and there are different narrative assumptions between the materials. Moreover, once-connected P narrative lines are often separated by non-P material. Esau's marriage to Hittite women and Rebekah's request for Jacob to engage in endogamy is one such separated story (Gen 26:34–35; 27:46). Another characteristic of P and non-P that shows that P was not originally a redactional layer is the disjointed chronology between P and non-P. For instance, in Gen 12 Sarah is 65 years old when she is seized by Pharaoh (Gen 12:10–20), and she is 90 when she is seized the second time (Gen 17:17; 20). Likewise, Hagar refers to Ishmael as a child, carries him, and sets him under a bush away from her so that she doesn't have to see and hear him die (Gen 21:13–16). This presents a seam, because in Gen 17, Ishmael is 14 years old. It cannot be assumed that the authors or redactors were careless in the development of the chronologies present in these works. The distinct chronologies present in P and in non-P make more sense for them to have originally been separate layers than for P to have originated as a correction to the non-P. Furthermore, the travel notices of P and non-P directly contradict one another when they are placed next to each other. For instance, Jacob travels in Padan-Aram and not Haran (Gen 28:2, 10; 29:1; 31:18). The P materials consistently clash with non-P materials. Despite the original separateness of P from the non-P material, P and non-P have been combined. Moreover, it appears that the author/redactor worked out of the framework

that P establishes and links the P and non-P materials through what Carr calls "P-like texts."[29]

One such "P-like text" is 2:4a. The *tôlĕdôt* formulas function as the bridge between P and non-P texts and provide narrative structure to Genesis.[30] The *tôlĕdôt* formulas are evidence of the redaction process, and perhaps even the redactor. The *tôlĕdôt* create the driving narrative force that weaves the non-P and P materials together into a unified story.[31] The redactor gives more weight to the P material by allowing the P narratives to guide the material forward and become the narrative framework for the non-P material. This preference for the P material creates a justification for speaking of the redactor/author as being a Priestly redactor.[32] Carr refers to this person as "Rp."[33]

Rp

Rp does not indiscriminately break up P texts to fit them into the non-P material. Genesis 1, for instance, seems complete. There is a beginning and an end to the creation account. Rp also seems to have authored a "P-like" framework for the non-P table of nations so that it could be included into the Priestly structure in Gen 10.[34] He then used the Priestly narratives of the deaths and genealogies of the patriarchs to frame the non-P patriarchal narratives. In the case of the Priestly version of the Joseph narrative,

29. Carr, *Fractures,* 115.

30. Carr, *Fractures,* 115.

31. Carr, *Fractures,* 115.

32. Carr, *Fractures,* 115.

33. Carr, *Fractures,* 115. John Van Seters and others have brought up significant challenges on whether it is appropriate to even speak of redaction and redactors in Genesis. See John Van Seters, *The Yahwist: A Historian of Israelite Origins* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 164. For responses to Van Seters, see Jean-Louis Ska, "A Plea on Behalf of Biblical Redactors," *ST* 59 (2005): 4–18.

34. Carr*, Fractures,* 116.

beginning in 37:2, it could have been inserted with the surrounding non-P text because of its close association with the surrounding narrative.[35] The framework of P surrounding the non-P material is itself one of the most helpful ways to identify P from non-P.[36] It is my opinion that Rp is responsible for using the P texts to frame the non-P texts. Even when P narratives are left in Genesis as entire narratives, such as Gen 1, 17, and 23, the full narratives are themselves inserted into the non-P materials as an entire narrative. The large P narratives are set against and frame the other non-P narratives.

Therefore, it seems that Rp was responsible for strategically combining the P material with the non-P material. However, there is one serious drawback to discerning the hand of Rp in the texts. Since Rp is discerned by using P to frame non-P, we are only able to distinguish Rp where he was unsuccessful. The differences are only noticeable where Rp did not change P to fit seamlessly into non-P. Where Rp accomplished weaving P and non-P materials seamlessly, it is difficult to separate the P text from the non-P text even if they were originally separate documents.

Because of the way Rp uses P to frame non-P texts, one can assume that Rp had access to Priestly narratives that had once existed as a whole unit. The creation narrative, the flood narrative, and the promise narratives illustrate that Rp had access to the entirety of each story. However, this may only be true for the narratives that exist as complete narratives. The flood narrative is unique in that it is the only narrative in which Rp parallels both P and non-P versions of the story. There is not another example where P parallels non-P versions of the same story. The special attention that Rp gives to the

35. Carr, *Fractures,* 116.

36. Carr, *Fractures,* 116.

structure of Genesis is unique to the flood narrative.[37] The flood narrative is also unique in that Rp did not simply set both whole narratives side by side, but rather interlaced the stories together so that there are not two flood stories in the text, as there are creation narratives and covenant texts, but separate diluvian sources that make up a single flood narrative.[38] However, it is because Rp preserved the P material that it can be distinguished from the non-P material, while at the same time, the P material has been artfully combined and paralleled with the non-P material so as to preserve both narratives, while also creating a new text in which P texts play key roles in non-P texts and vice versa. In the case of the flood narrative, diachronic and synchronic methods can help us observe both the original strands and their final position in Genesis as a single narrative.

Much can be learned when the genealogies are examined through both the diachronic and synchronic lens. The genealogies play a key role in how the combined text flows, so that the canonical text is cohesive and logical as Rp has created it. And also, as we will explore later, the P version of the Abraham covenant occurs after the non-P narrative of Ishmael's conception and birth so that the Priestly covenantal text in Gen 17 is able to comment on Ishmael who is already born and capable of being blessed and Isaac who is yet but a promise that Abraham and Sarah are awaiting. Rp drew upon the P sources in order to create his document; however, the multiple layers were not preserved for the sake of posterity, but were rather constructed into a cohesive narrative of the origins of the world, humanity, and Israel.

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37. Gordon Wenham, "The Coherence of the Flood Narrative," *VT* 28 (1978): 336–48.

38. P. J. Harland, *The Value of Human Life: A Study of the Story of the Flood (Genesis 6–9),* VTSup 64 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 6–20.

It is also of note that P and non-P are remarkably similar traditions in the sense that they are closely related enough that Rp can place them together as he has done, but in an altogether different fashion from the flood narrative. The narrative arcs of both P and non-P are similar: creation, flood, post-diluvian promise, life and covenant of Abraham, life and covenant with Jacob, life of Joseph, and Israel's migration to Egypt.[39]

Table 1. P and corresponding non-P texts

Narrative Event	P	Non-P
Creation	1:1–2:3	2:4–3:24
Adam to Noah	5:1–28, 30-32	4:1–26, 5:29
The Flood	6:9–22; 7:6, 11, 13–16, 18–21, 23–24; 8:1–2, 3-–5, 14–19; 9:1–17	6:1–8; 7:1–2, 3b–5, 7, 10, 12, 16–17, 22, 23; 8:2b–3, 6–12, 13, 20–22
Postdiluvian Genealogy	11:10–26	10:1b, 8–19, 21, 24–30
Abraham Journeys to Canaan	11:27–32; 12:4b–5	12:1–4a, 6–8
The Separation of Lot	13:6, 11b–12	13:1–5, 7-11a, 12b–18
Birth of Ishmael	16:3, 15–16	16:1–2, 4–14
Abrahamic Covenant	17:1-27	15:1–21
Sodom and Gomorrah	19:29	19:1–28
Birth of Isaac	21:3–5	21:1–2, 6–7
Patrilineal Blessing	25:11	26:24–25
Ishmael's Life	21:21	21:20
Isaac's Marriage	25:19–20, 26b	24
Jacob Leaves Home	26:34–35; 27:46–28:9	27:1-45

39. Carr, *Fractures,* 125.

Jacob Leaves Haran	31:17–18	31:19–20
Jacob at Bethel	35:19–15	28:10–22- 32:29
Jacob's Children	35:22b–26	29:31–30:24; 35:16–20
Introduction of Joseph	37:2	37:3–11
Jacob Migrates to Egypt	46:5–7, 8–27	46:1–4, 28a
Jacob Before Pharaoh	47:7–10	46:28–34; 47:1–4, 6b
Jacob's Family Settles in Egypt	47:11	47:27a
Jacob Becomes Wealthy	47:27b	47:12-26
Ephraim and Manasseh	48:3–6	48:1–2, 8–22
Jacob's Death	47:28; 49:1a, 29–33	47:29–31
Jacob Buried	50:12–13	50:1–11
Joseph's Death	50:22–23, 26a	Exod 1:6

The Intertextuality of P

This leads me to the next point that I would like to explore: there is an intertextual relationship between P and non-P. The chart above does not include all of the material within Genesis, but all of the material with respect to P and non-P texts that have general narrative similarities. The similarities are remarkable for a text upon which so much research has been done to discern the differences. The relative importance given to P in the primeval history is also important to note, as there is more P material than non-P, whereas in the ancestral history, the non-P material is more full in its treatment of the narrative. Whether this is representative of the original sources or not is impossible to tell, because there are too many possibilities for Rp to have selectively used his sources to the extent that was meaningful in his context. Regardless, the primeval history of P is

extended albeit comparable in length to non-P, whereas the ancestral history of non-P is extended and lengthier than P, with some narratives completely lacking a P counterpart, such as an extended Ishmael genealogy.[40] There are also non-P stories for which there is no P counterpart, such as Gen 21:8–20. There is enough of a sample size to conclude that P has different narrative goals in mind compared to non-P. The different narrative goals are illustrated best when there is comparative narrative material where the emphases of P and non-P can be differentiated. P was therefore aware enough of non-P to make selective changes to the narratives, in order to provide a narrative focus on what Carr calls a "covenant-focused expanded genealogy" instead of simply retelling the non-P narratives as they existed.[41]

A question that needs to be raised at this point is what role the gaps play in the intertextuality of P with non-P. Cross asserts that P contains gaps that require P to be read along with non-P. Cross points to a lack of a primordial fall, sacrifice of Isaac, Jacob's wives and his contentions with Esau, a Moses origin story, a Sinai covenant, etc.[42] This criticism has been resoundingly answered by Emerton by stating that P is not required to be the same kind of narrative document that J and E are.[43] Cross makes the mistake of comparing P to non-P, rather than examining P on its own grounds. Rendtorff argues that P is incoherent based on his observations that there are no connections between the P texts in the Patriarchal history.[44] He is unwilling to assert that Gen 23 is a Priestly text,

40. Carr, *Fractures,* 127.

41. Carr, *Fractures,* 127.

42. Cross, *Canaanite Myth,* 306–18.

43. J. A. Emerton, "The Priestly Writer in Genesis," *JTS* 39 (1988), 381–400.

44. Rolf Rendtorff, *The Problem of the Process,* 138–53.

which I will deal with in chapter 4 of this thesis, but the purchase of the burial plot is integral to the death notices of P. It makes sense then that Rendtorff misses the connections made in P. The only gap within P that is important to P's own narrative is Jacob and Esau's birth (although this is glossed in 25:26) and the narratives of Jacob's wives.[45] In these cases, there are extended non-P narratives which may suggest a dependence of P on non-P.

This also leads me to conclude, in regards to the intertextuality of P and non-P, that P revises the non-Priestly material in major ways while also maintaining the existing narrative structure of non-P. The primeval history is revised and corrected to include God's covenant with humanity after the flood. The covenant with Abraham is revised and systematized with features in Gen 17 that Gen 12:1–3, 15:1–21, and 18:10–14 do not have.[46] More evidence of P's shift in focus is the Priestly revision of Jacob's dream at Bethel. In P's version, Jacob does not set up a cultic center, but instead makes a single drink offering (Gen 28:22). In P's account, Jacob does not leave his family's house out of fear for his life for stealing the blessing from Esau; instead, he leaves because the Hittite wives of Esau were a burden to Rebekah and P has Jacob receiving the blessing for that purpose (Gen 27:46–28:9).

In contrast to non-P, P is cohesive in divine blessing functioning from the very beginning and carrying through the whole narrative. The covenant with Abraham is thus a continuation of the covenant with Noah. Thus, P presents a consistent narrative that God deals with evil and wickedness with destruction and also through the preservation of

45. Ska, *Introduction,* 147.

46. Carr, *Fractures,* 127.

the covenantal structure. Structure and order against evil, rebellion, and chaos are significant parts of this revision, even intruding into the structuring of the text itself.

The *Tôlĕdôt* Formulas

The *tôlĕdôt* formulas form the backbone of Genesis and also carry the narrative weight of P. There have been a couple of suggestions in regard to the *tôlĕdôt.* The first is that *tôlĕdôt* is the work of a redactor who added them to P in order to provide the structure to Genesis.[47] The other option is that the *tôlĕdôt* formulas are original to P.[48] I have taken up the former position and will provide my reason for doing so. The *tôlĕdôt* formulas function to bridge the gap between the P material and non-Priestly material often. This is most clear in Gen 2:4.

The *tôlĕdôt* formula occurs after the description of the creation has taken place in chapter 1, and it has been interpreted as a subscription to the Priestly account of creation from 1:1–2:3. However, it functions just as well, if not better, as the superscription for J's creation narrative. This is clear, because 2:4a does not connect to the next section of P material in 5:1. So either the *tôlĕdôt* formula refers to material that is missing, which is impossible to know; is a subscription, which would be unique to this single occurrence; or is a superscription of the J account.[49] In all of the *tôlĕdôt* formula occurrences after 2:4a, the occurrence begins at the beginning of the P material rather than at the end.

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47. See Childs, *Introduction,* 147; Richard Friedman, *The Exile and Biblical Narrative: The Formation of the Deuteronomistic and Priestly Works,* HSM 22 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981), 76–119.

48. For the argument that the *tôlĕdôt* formulas are original to P, see Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1956).

49. For the argument that the *tôlĕdôt* should be read as superscriptions and not colophons see Jason Derouchie, "The Blessing-Commission, The Promised Offspring, and the Toledot Structure of Genesis," *JETS* 56/2 (2013): 219–47.

However, in every case, the *tôlĕdôt* formula indicates a shift from one set of material to another. The *tôlĕdôt* formula fulfills the role of bridging the P material and non-P material, and as such creating the canonical Genesis composition.[50] The *tôlĕdôt* links the two sets of materials, but also stands apart from the two materials. As I have already described, P could have been a separate document and the evidence of Rp lies in the *tôlĕdôt* sections throughout. The *tôlĕdôt* formulas do therefore serve a redactional purpose, but in the sense of unity. As such, it is my opinion that *tôlĕdôt* formulas are one of the seams that Rp is responsible for in composing the combined narrative of Genesis. The question that must be answered now is what purpose the *tôlĕdôt* serve within the lens of traumatic readings. I now want to briefly attempt to provide a date for the composition of Genesis. Although I want to recognize that traumatic readings of these texts do not depend upon hard estimations for the composition of this text, dating P does allow for a conceptualization of events that may have occurred when this text was being composed. After which, I will return to the *tôlĕdôt* to explore the ways in which a traumatic reading of P and the *tôlĕdôt* may be helpful.

The Traumatic Circumstances of P

The interests behind P in Genesis through Numbers are clear. Namely, the Priestly material emphasizes and focuses on the interests of the Priestly group. The interests of the Priestly group in Genesis are more difficult to discern; nevertheless, they carry through the rest of the Tetrateuch. The Priestly material in Exodus and Leviticus makes the identification of this group more likely. For instance the emphasis that is given to the construction of the tabernacle in Exodus reveals a level of focus on the details of the

50. Childs, *Introduction,* 146.

tabernacle that shows that tabernacle worship was important in all of the minutiae of its details including its construction (25–28; 30:30–31, 35–40). The concern with the ordination of priests and their responsibilities and vestments also reveals concerns for the priesthood. Detailed instructions for sacrifices (albeit not comprehensive) and purity laws for the life of Israel and the concern for Aaron and the Levites' role in Israel life reveals the importance that the P material places on the concerns of the priests (Lev 1–7; 11–15).

The designation of the material as sharing concerns with the priesthood is not entirely sufficient since there are multiple groups of priests within and without the text with different interests. However, identification of the exact group of priests is difficult. Aaron features prominently in the P material, which suggests that Aaronides may be responsible for the P material.[51] There are also connections between the material describing the tabernacle in Exod 25–40 and the material describing the temple in Ezek 40–48. However, in Ezekiel's description of the temple, the priestly group that is mentioned are the Zadokites and not the Aaronides. And yet, the similarities in the two sets of materials are the exclusive rights of the priestly group to administer the cultic practices as well as the differentiation of the priestly class from the Levites. It makes sense that there is similar theology between the group responsible for Ezek 40–48 and the Priestly group behind the P material in the Tetrateuch.[52] The priestly group behind the P material seems to have had a concern for the Aaronide claim to the administration of the temple cult.

51. Carr, *Fractures,* 130.

52. Hurvitz, *A Linguistic Study,* 150.

The Priestly conceptualization of the cultic laws and life of Israelites is evident in the P material and such material helps to create a strategy to date within a broad range the material of P and thus also Rp. The emphasis in P on the localization of the cult, namely that the cult is itself the divinely sanctioned group where the people and God work together, helps to date the time and the world of P. The P material moves from creation to the establishment of the centrality of the cult and its people around it. As such, the time before the death of Moses is authoritative for the identity of the people moving forward.[53] This I think represents some of the basic cultic ideas of concerning the cults own importance within P.

This helps us date P in a number of ways. The centrality of the Law has been argued by Wellhausen and others to be the result of a developed Israelite religion and therefore post-exilic; however, it has been substantially argued that the laws themselves may be representative of pre-exilic Israelite religion and culture, and that some P material might even predate the pre-exilic Deuteronomic law.[54] It is now commonplace for Torah to be seen as early in the history of Israelite Religion as many of the oral traditions. There are advocates for both positions that P is early and also that P is late. But it seems that there are very few who advocate for something akin to Wellhausen's position that the entirety of P is post-exilic; rather, a more common view is a combined position that P contains both early (even pre-exilic) and late material but that the development of P as it

53. Carr, *Fractures,* 132.

54. See Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel: From Its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile,* vol. 1, trans. M. Greenberg (New York: Schocken Books, 1960), 175–200; Y. Grintz, "'Do Not Eat the Blood': Reconsiderations upon Setting and Date of the Priestly Code," in *Studies in Early Biblical Ethnology and History* (Tel Aviv, Israel: Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing, 1969), 201–21; M. Haran, "Behind the Scenes of History: Determining the Date of the Priestly source," *JBL* 100 (1981): 327–30; Friedman, *Exile and Biblical Narrative,* 47–76.

can be discerned in canonical shape is a late occurrence. In this sense there has been a separation of the origination of the Law and the historical dating of P. As such, an approach to dating P that sees the development of Israelite religion from unstructured and non-institutional to relying on institutions and formalizations to date P does not actually deal with P. So the religious practices and cultic traditions, which may be much older than the post-exilic era, must still be accounted for prior to their having been included into P in written form. For my purposes, therefore, I want to answer the question of the dating of P when it became the P that is represented in the Pentateuch and Genesis in particular.

Because the contents of P may have traditions much older than the written form, whether archaisms or the continuation of linguistic forms, it is not entirely useful to attempt to date P as a whole document according to the linguistic forms. Instead, the theology that characterizes P is one of the more reasonable approaches to dating the whole document. As such, the exilic period is a very reasonable period of time for the dating of P, although it is entirely possible, as has been argued by Hurvitz, that P is much earlier.[55] The centralization of the cult is assumed in P, whereas if it were earlier, this assumption would be competing against other non-localized cultic positions.[56] P is not assumed by early exilic or pre-exilic texts, but it is firmly established by the time of the post-exilic texts of Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles. Lastly, P has its own narrative structure and tells a story on its own, but between it and Rp, it is familiar with and in some cases reliant upon the non-P material. For instance, P seems to be dependent upon

55. Hurvitz, *Linguistic Study,* 150.

56. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel,* Trans. by J. Sutherland Black and Allan Menzies, Edinburgh, A&C Black. 1885, 175–307.

Gen 15, which may itself be a late addition to the Abraham corpus.[57] These pieces of evidence seem to suggest that P existed as a whole in at least the post-exilic period and perhaps earlier into the exilic period.

The concretization of P would take place later in the development of P as it was modified and synthesized with the non-P material of Genesis. However, in Genesis, there is remarkable focus on the life of the ancestors sojourning outside of the land. Circumcision as a mark of the covenant took on special significance during the exilic period for covenantal identification.[58] Passover as a festival that can be celebrated outside the land becomes the major holy day to a people whose temple has been destroyed, and Sabbath becomes the weekly religious observance.[59] Endogamy and continuing Israelite genealogies are values held as markers of the continuance of families and social cohesion. P also seems familiar with the late exilic material of Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah. The "glory of the Lord" in Ezekiel and the anti-idol polemics and creation theology of Isaiah bear remarkable resemblance to the overarching theological commitments of P,[60] although, linguistically, a very strong case can be made that the Hebrew in P is earlier than Ezekiel.[61]

57. Carr, *Fractures,* 137.

58. Carr, *Fractures,* 137.

59. W. Wood, "The Congregation of Yahweh: A Study of the Theology and Purpose of the Priestly Document" (Ph.D. Diss.: Princeton, 1974), 167–79.

60. See Moshe Weinfeld, "God the Creator in Gen. 1 and in the Prophecy of Second Isaiah," *Tarbiz* 37 (1967–68),105–32. Weinfeld takes the position that the Isaiah is later than the P Creation narrative based upon the process of invention of practices and that criticism of said practices occurs after; however, he does point out a connection.

61. Hurvitz, *Linguistic Study*, 150.

P thus is dealing with the realities of displacement, disaster, and deportation. These events create identity crises at the national and traditional level.[62] In responding to the events of the seventh through sixth centuries, P radically creatively rethinks the non-P traditions in order to adapt, survive, and remember its national identity without the stability and security that living in one's homeland provides. P creates this past by reflexively describing the present concerns of Jews in exile through language of ancient covenant and legislation. Even if the stories and laws are much older than the exile, they are recreated to speak into the circumstances of repeated forced migrations.

Traumatic Readings of the *Tôlĕdôt* Formulas

I have already argued that the structure of Genesis is held in place by the *tôlĕdôt.* What I would like to turn my attention to finally is how the structure itself can be understood from a traumatic lens. The *tôlĕdôt* structures exist as two sets of five lists in Genesis. The first set of five moves from Adam to Abraham, and the second set moves from Abraham to the sons of Jacob.[63]

Table 2. *Tôlĕdôt* formula pentads

Primeval History	Ancestral History
Creation 2:4	Terah–Abraham 11:27-25:11
Adam 5:1	Ishmael 25:18
Noah 6:9	Isaac 25:19–35:29

62. Daniel Smith, *Religion of the Landless: The Social Context of the Babylonian Exile* (Bloomington, IN: Meyer-Stone Books, 1989), 59.

63. Matthew Thomas believes that the *tôlĕdôt* that do not begin with a waw are the five major headings of the book, whilst the five without the waw mark subheadings. I do not share his opinion, but see Matthew Thomas, *These Are the Generations: Identity, Covenant, and the Tôlĕdôt Formula,* LHBOTS (New York, NY: T & T Clark, 2011), 82.

Noah's Sons 10:1	Esau 36:1 (9)–43
Shem 11:10	Jacob 37:2–50:26

Abraham occupies the first position in the ancestral history portion of the *tôlĕdôt.* The first, third, and fifth sections of the ancestral pentad refer to family eponyms, and the second and fourth refer to eponyms for Israel's neighbors. This is the partial function of the *tôlĕdôt* sections*,* as they also bridge the eponymous function to the immediate narratives of the descendants. As such, the *tôlĕdôt* provides the narrative structure and is perhaps the latest addition to Genesis, but so also the socio-historical and personal concerns of Rp create the necessary circumstances to tie these separate narratives together. A question that might be raised is why certain names (Ishmael and Esau) are chosen for the *tôlĕdôt* formula and not others (Haran or Nahor). The reason for the inclusion of Ishmael and Esau and not others for eponymous purposes is that eponymy is not the sole purpose. Instead each of the *tôlĕdôt* formulas track with the promises given by God, especially in the ancestral portion. Esau and Ishmael were both competitors for the promise and also representative of Israel's neighbors. Nahor and Haran were not. The promise of land and progeny are both realized and reiterated in each of the ancestral *tôlĕdôt.* Furthermore, the overall narrative of the *tôlĕdôt* structure begins and ends outside the land while the question of progeny is realized. The promises that are thus realized in the *tôlĕdôt* formulas create a unity of questions asked and answered throughout the canonical Genesis.

Against the backdrop of the exile and post-exile, the divine promise of land was shaky. Indeed, who would settle and live in the land? Was there a divine right to the land, or would the neighboring peoples inherit the land? Moreover, the emphasis on endogamy

through family genealogies describes the challenging reality that a diasporic people should continue to marry within a tribal family group. As was shown with the contemporary case of the multigenerational survivors of the Armenian genocide, the ancestral homeland and marriage within the same people group are mechanisms for the survival of peoples.[64] As such, the schema that undergirds the entirety of Genesis in the form of the *tôlĕdôt* formulas can be read functionally as survival narratives for the people of the exile, as they carry within them the concerns of a war-torn and exiled people. The *tôlĕdôt* formulas express optimism for the ancestors in the realization of the promise of progeny and land, so also reflexively for the people who have survived exile.

Summary

In this chapter, I have attempted to work through the major problems of P as a distinct layer in the book of Genesis. P provides the theological structure for Genesis, and this often occurs in the ways the narratives are framed by P. The Priestly material also contains evidence, linguistically and thematically, that it could be as early as the monarchy period, but regardless, P as a distinct layer and as a framework for non-P has in mind the concerns of the Priesthood. Thus, during the period of the composition of Genesis, P has within it an awareness of the multiple exiles which began to take place in the eighth century. P makes meaning of these traumas in its entirety, but also particularly in Genesis. In the next chapter, I will attempt to show how Gen 17 functions within Genesis as a whole but also within the P narrative, and also how Gen 17 answers the

64. Diane Kupelian, Anie Sanentz Kalayjian, and Alice Kassabian, "The Turkish Genocide of the Armenians: Continuing Effects on Survivors and Their Families Eight Decades after Massive Trauma," In *International Handbook of Multigenerational Legacies of Trauma,* Edited by Yael Danieli, New York: Plenum Press, 1998, 192.

questions of identity regarding inclusion of peoples within the covenant and covenantal obligations.

CHAPTER III

A TRAUMATIC READING OF GENESIS 17

Gen 17 is one of the major theological texts of the Priestly materials within Genesis. In this chapter, I intend to show that there are themes within Gen 17, and the P narrative as a whole, that address the bewildering and confusing socio-traumas of the multiple exiles. These themes include names and naming, the covenant obligations of both Yaweh and Abraham's family, the status of the covenant, and the status of Ishmael's inclusion into the covenant.

Genesis 17 in P

In Gen 17, God appears to Abram and in P establishes his covenant with Abram, and in the overall scheme of Genesis, expands upon the covenant already given in Gen 12 and 15. Genesis 17 bears strong evidence of the hand of Rp, and some have suggested that Gen 17 is entirely the creation of Rp.[1] The major reason given for Rp authorship of Gen 17 is the similarities between this text and the non-P covenant texts.[2]

The theophany instigated by God consists of the revelation of a new divine name and reveals God's covenantal intention through dialogue between God and Abram. In this way, the text is quite similar to the covenantal texts of Gen 12 and 15. Abram's dialogue is sparser than it is in the non-P materials, but the questions which Abram raises are

1. Bill Arnold, *Genesis*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 168. Arnold believes that the redactor was a member of the Holiness School.

2. Arnold, *Genesis,* 168.

focused. However in this text, God delivers five speeches to Abram, in which God promises that Abram will be the father of peoples through his children. He changes the names of Abram and Sarai to Abraham and Sarah, institutes circumcision as the sign of the covenant, and proclaims the birth of Isaac.

The first task is establishing whether Gen 17 is from the Priestly source or whether it is from the hand of Rp. There are several seams in this text. One such seam is the use of the divine name. In 15:7 God introduces himself to Abraham as "YHWH," whereas God introduces himself as El-Shaddai in Gen 17. However, the seam in verse 1 is itself difficult. Verse 1 is written as follows:

וַיְהִי אַבְרָם בֶּן־תִּשְׁעִים שָׁנָה וְתֵשַׁע שָׁנִים וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה אֶל־אַבְרָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֲנִי־אֵל שַׁדַּי
הִתְהַלֵּךְ לְפָנַי וֶהְיֵה תָמִים

God introduces himself as אל שדי in verse 1, but the narrator has already referred to God as יהוה in the same verse. There are several possibilities to explain the anomalies here. The first option is that the entire verse is from a single hand. The second option is that the phrase, וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה אֶל־אַבְרָם has been combined by Rp from separate sources, or it is completely original to Rp. The second option makes the most sense to me. First, Rp has shown through the *tôlĕdôt* formulas that he is not against adding to the separate sources that he is working from. Moreover, the primary function of the *tôlĕdôt* formulas is to bridge non-P and P materials. This verse performs exactly the same bridging function. God has revealed himself as יהוה in the non-P Gen 15:7. However, the Priestly promise texts (Gen 17; 28:3; 35:11; 48:3) describe the gradual revelation of the divine name. In the primeval texts, God is referred to as אלהים. In the ancestral history texts, the revelation of the divine name in the P source becomes אל שדי. This name is carried

throughout P until Exod 6:3, where the name of God is finally revealed to Moses. The revelation of the divine name is the most consistent inconsistency in Genesis and the easiest pattern to use to differentiate sources. With the consistency of P through Genesis on the subject of which divine name is used, it is inconsistent of P to use the tetragrammaton to refer to God in this text. Therefore, v. 1 does seem to indicate that it is either a combination of sources, or a complete fabrication from Rp.

Lastly this verse is a pivotal verse in the P narrative. The divine title אל שדי is revealed. It is impossible to know whether Rp composed this verse, but with the consistency of אל שדי being used throughout the P promise texts, it seems possible, and perhaps even probable, that the divine title is original to the P source and is not supplied in every instance by Rp. The logic becomes circular here as the evidence is used to support further speculation. For instance, if Rp has composed this entire chapter, including the revelation of the divine title אל שדי to Abram, then that represents a serious gap in the P narrative for the progression of the revelation of the divine name. Moreover if the use of the divine title אל שדי in Gen 17 is not part of the originally separate P source but is attributed to Rp, then many of the seams used to identify sources face an even greater challenge.[3] There is a seam here, but it is not necessary to conclude that a divergence from the pattern is evidence that all texts that use the same divine title belong together. Additionally, when one name is used where it would be expected that another be used, it is not necessary to conclude that is evidence of a redactor in that instance.[4] It is

3. See Joel Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch: Renewing the Documentary Hypothesis,* AYBRL, (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 2012), 31. Baden asserts that the analysis of the sources of the Pentateuch must be guided by considerations to the narrative flow, rather than themes, historical setting, and style.

4. Klaus Koch, "P-kein Redactor!," *VT* 37:4 (1987): 462–66.

simply another piece of evidence to be considered along with the chapter. It can be stated that, at the very least, 17:1 represents in its final form a desire to bridge the different sources by using both the divine name, יהוה, and אל שדי, which would allow for both the original P and Rp's influence on P.

To further complicate the issue, Gen 17 shows signs of dependence upon Gen 15 and 18.

Table 3. Genesis 17 and parallels in non-P[5]

Gen 17	Non-P Parallels
Self Revelation of God: 17:1	12:7a; 15:7
Divine Promise: 17:1–2	12:7; 15:1
Abram's Response: 17:3a	15:2–3
Promise of Procreation: 17:3b–6	12:7b; 15:4–5
Promise of Land: 17:7–8	12:7c; 15:7–18
Promise to Sarah: 17:15–16	18:10
Laughing Response: 17:17a (Abraham Laughs)	18:10 (Sarah Laughs)
Sarah's age: 17:17b	18:11
Promise is Confirmed: 17:18–21	18:13–14

Genesis 17 thus reflects much of the same tendencies of the primeval history as a whole, namely that it shares the same narrative flow and structure with non-P sources,

5. David Carr, *Reading the Fractures of Genesis: Historical and Literary Approaches* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 83. Carr has a table of similar parallels between P and non-P. The table above is focused narrowly on parallels Non-P parallels to Gen 17.

which suggests a direct dependence of P on the non-P sources of 15 and 18.[6] The promise text of Gen 12 repeats themes, but the narrative form is distinct from 15, 17, and 18. The promises that are given in Gen 17 are doubled in chapter 15 and 18, which are non-P texts. Moreover, Gen 17 does not seem to be aware of these promises already having been delivered, either in chapter 12 or 15. The promises for the progeny and land in non-P are repeated here with enough narrative differences to suggest that they were indeed once separate. Furthermore, the overall narrative forms of both P and non-P follow the same form of promise delivery. First comes the self-revelation of God, followed by the initial promise of progeny, which is followed by land. These parallels suggest that P was dependent upon, or at the very least aware of, the non-P accounts.[7] Although these same parallels work in the opposite direction, they have been used to support non-P's dependence upon Gen 17.[8] In summary, my argument regarding Gen 17 in P is that this pericope is distinct from the non-P covenantal texts despite sharing similarities in themes with non-P. Rp may have reworked it to be included into the Genesis narrative, but non-P dependence is not necessary.

Deterritorialization of the Divine Name

I have attempted to provide justification for situating Gen 17 within the P source as well as briefly describing the socio-historical context of P in the previous chapter. I would like to now turn my attention to the literary factors that lead me to suggest that P's

6. Sean McEvenue, *The Narrative Style of the Priestly Writer,* Analytica Biblica 50 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1971), 152–55; John Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1975, 282–85.

7. Carr, *Fractures,* 84.

8. For this perspective, see Thomas Römer, "Genesis 15 and 17: Beobachtungen und Anfragen zu einem Dogma der 'neueren' und 'neuesten' Pentateuchkritik," *DBAT* 26 (1990): 33.

version of the Abrahamic covenant can be read as traumatic literature in the sense that the covenant and narrative in Gen 17 provides answers to the questions that trauma raises, and that such questions are traumatic. As such, even if the composition of Gen 17 is pre-exilic, as Avi Hurvitz has suggested, the answers that it provides provide opportunity for reflexive understandings when faced with trauma. I will first deal with the convention of naming in this text and attempt to draw out some traumatic understandings.

First, God reveals himself as אל שדי to Abram. Abram's name is changed after the promise of progeny is given, and Sarah's name is changed after she has been issued the promise that she will deliver Isaac. In the P narrative, the progression of the revelation of God's name begins in Genesis and is concluded in Exodus and is a major narrative feature. As stated before, in the primeval history, God is simply referred to as אלהים. In this text God reveals himself as אל שדי. In Exodus there are two revelations of the divine name. The first is in Exod 3:13–14, which is an alternative account to the one in Exod 6:2–3. The account in Exod 3 locates the revelation to Moses in the Midianite Wilderness, while the one in Exod 6 locates the revelation in Egypt.

James A. Barr revolutionized the study of etymology with his scathing criticisms of the use of etymology as descriptors of characters.[9] His work *The Semantics of Biblical Language* has been especially important when it comes to the tetragrammaton and the etymological relationship between the name and its use in Exod 3:14 and 6:2–3. The same arguments should be used in regards to the divine name given to Abraham in Gen

9. See James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (London, UK: Oxford University Press, 1961).

17:1.[10] Barr asserts that the theological weight is not derived from the etymology of the name, but rather how themes and motifs connected to the name arise from the narrative itself. That is not to say that names do not carry narrative weight but rather that the narrative provides the interpretive power for the name.[11] There are several important issues surrounding the name אל שדי that are not etymological but sociological or theological.

In regards to שדד and its connection to שדי, these two words are phonetically similar and are placed together in Isa 13:6 (כְּשֹׁד מִשַּׁדַּי יָבוֹא) and Joel 1:15, which shares the exact same formulation. שדי is also the most commonly used divine title in Job and often is used in reference to divine judgment, disaster, and anger (Job 6:4; 19:29; 21:20; 29:5; Joel 1:15; Ezek 1:24; 10:5). Apart from Job, which is likely a late text, the usage of the title of אל שדי is a feature that P shares with other exilic texts. As such, the connection between שדד and שדי has been made in reference to the divine name in Genesis.[12]

What is lacking in Genesis are the narrative connections of this divine name to divine judgment. In Exodus, it is not אל שדי that is used to describe the God who judges Egypt, but rather the Tetragrammaton is used. Instead, אל שדי is primarily connected in Genesis to the covenantal texts and also the ability of God to fulfill those promises. Regardless, the texts that utilize this divine name (with perhaps the exception of Genesis

10. For Instance see Jo Ann Hackett, "The Balaam Text from Deir ᶜAllä," *HSM* 31 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980), 85–89; Hackett writes about the name אל שדי being etymologically related to the verb שדד or the *šaddayīn* of the Deir ᶜAlla texts.

11. For instance see, David Astori, "Avra(ha)m and Sara(i): Infertility Overcome by a Linguistic Redox," in *Name and Naming: Synchronic and Diachronic Perspectives*, ed. Oliviu Felecan (Newcastle: UK, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 34–48.

12. Austin Surls, *Making Sense of the Divine Name in the Book of Exodus: From Etymology to Literary Onomastics,* Bulletin for Biblical Research Supplement 17 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2017), 1–24; 83–115.

being the earliest source) all seem to be relegated to events after the first quarter of the sixth century. Therefore whatever etymological meaning אל שדי may have had originally is not ultimately important, as the usage of name itself became more popular in the exilic period to refer to God.

Why does the revelation of the name of God as אל שדי matter in regards to trauma? Distinct from the other texts that deploy this name when referring to impending danger, Genesis utilizes this name ultimately with hope. אל שדי refers to the God who speaks to Abram and Sarai and promises them land and progeny. The power that is associated with the name is not necessarily in reference to God's ability to judge, but is perhaps used in reference to God who will deliver on his promises. The power of God to deliver on the promise of progeny is particularly contentious in Gen 17, as shown by Abraham's laughter. And yet, there is no sign of judgment within this text or the other uses of this name in P. Instead, P uses the name of God when it refers to the deity's acts of faithfulness toward Abraham, Sarah, and Ishmael. The use of אל שדי in Gen 17 creates the opportunity for intertextual theological generation. It increases the breadth not simply of possible origins of the name, but theological applications. In Exod 6:2–3 P ties the divine names together, and the arguments of whether אל and יהוה once historically referred to different deities is answered theologically.[13] P specifically creates a narrative that the deity who was revealed as אל שדי is יהוה. It is not clear whether P or Rp was

13. See Aren M. Wilson-Wright, "Bethel and the Persistence of El: Evidence for the Survival of El as an Independent Deity in the Jacob Cycle and 1 Kings 12:25–30," *JBL* 138:4 (2019): 705–20.

aware of the location-specific deities and the historical merging of these deities; however, P intentionally draws the different names together to refer to the same deity.[14]

The liquidation of the Judean state requires a theological situation where the deity is no longer restricted to a geographical location. In Ezek 10 the prophet describes the movement of the כְּבוֹד אֱלֹהֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל east to Babylon. This move has been described as the deterritorialization of the divine name.[15] From this point on, יהוה is no longer associated solely with the temple in Judah, but it is associated with the people of Judah wherever they may be. In Gen 17, יהוה is used in verse 1 in reference to God, who is speaking to Abram; however, since this is Abram's first encounter with the deity, he does not know that this is the deity's name. Instead, the deity reveals himself to be אל, שדי with the third revelation of the name of God happening in Exod 6:2–3, where the narrator supplies the information that אל שדי is actually יהוה speaking to Abram.

The divine name is important and the historical associations of the different names are important. With multiple traditions regarding the name for the Israelite deity and also the character of said deity, P and Rp provide theological answers to who this deity is and why there are multiple names in the tradition, and they also answer the question of the character of said deity. This is one of the rare instances in P where אל שדי is יהוה, and there is continuity between the God who created the world, entered into covenant with the ancestors, brought Israel up from Egypt, and also judged Israel via the Assyrians and Babylonians. The reconciliation of multiple divine names occurred, at least

14. See also Thomas Römer, *The Invention of God,* trans. Raymond Geuss (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 225–27.

15. Joseph Blenkinsopp, "Abraham as Paradigm in the Priestly History in Genesis," *JBL* 128 (2009): 236.

partially, as a response to trauma. The liquidation of the Judean state raised theological questions about the future for Israel. אל שדי generates a miraculous future for Abram and Sarai through the promise of the birth of Isaac through the covenant establishment with Abram. Moreover the loss of religious identity in the wake of the exile is answered in the canonical Genesis. The identity of the God is answered in P and in the final product that the referents of the different divine name traditions point conclusively to YHWH. Moreover the promises of progeny and land are the promise of a future, which is of the utmost importance during the possible periods of the origination of this text. The creation of this future from אל שדי has resounding themes throughout the first millennium BCE. Next I will deal with the characters of both Abram and Sarai.

The Covenant

The rest of Gen 17 describes the establishment of the covenant between God and Abram, Sarai, and the generations that will come after Abram. The covenant text begins with the revelation of the divine being who is Abram's interlocutor. There is the condition of the covenant that comes in 17:1b that Abram would go out before God and be blameless. There are also the covenant obligations that God spells out more fully in vv. 9–14. The initial promise is given in verses 1–3 in regards to God giving progeny to Abram. Abram responds to the divine introduction by displaying an act of submission through falling on his face. This is the first interaction between the two parties who are entering into the covenant together in P. The covenant obligations then follow with God describing first his obligations to Abram. The sign given for his own obligations is the changing of Abram's name to Abraham, which sounds similar to אַב־הֲמוֹן.[16] The

16. Astori, "Avra(ha)m," 36.

covenantal obligations of God to Abraham also include the gift of the land of Canaan to be עוֹלָם. אֲחֻזַּת. The obligations of Abraham are then described (circumcision), which also act as the sign of the covenant. Sarah and Ishmael are then also blessed, and Abraham and his family and servants are circumcised and so fulfill their covenantal obligations.

The main content of this covenant is identifying and blessing the proper heir of Abraham and multiplying of Abraham's descendants. The promise of land is given in chapter 17, but it is not explored to the extent of the promise of Isaac. The question that is in the background but comes into the foreground of this chapter is whether Ishmael can be an appropriate heir to the covenant. The answer that Gen 17 gives is mixed, as I will explain shortly. Biologically, Ishmael is the only option for an heir without miraculous intervention. P provides the age notices that at the time of this divine encounter, Abraham is ninety-nine years old, and Sarah is ninety years old. She is well beyond the age of having children biologically, which makes Ishmael a capable inheritor. But at these advanced ages, Abram's name is changed to Abraham and Sarai's name changed to Sarah, which reflects God's changing of their characters.[17] Abraham will indeed be the father of multiple peoples, but the true heir will be born to Sarah. The name change itself signals a radical change in Abraham and Sarah's life.

God also presents further obligations for himself by stating that Abraham will become "fruitful" and that the term of the covenant is "everlasting." It does not terminate upon the death of Abraham but it is a covenant that continues down the generations. It is thus described as a בְּרִית עוֹלָם. This is not to be misunderstood as a covenant without

17. Astori, "Avra(ha)m," 36.

obligations, but that the death of the vassal is not a termination clause of the covenant. Instead the covenant extends to all of the progeny of Abraham.

The land is brought up as the final part of God's obligations to Abraham. The land will itself be a gift to Abraham and his descendants. If the present problem facing Abraham and Sarah in having a child is their advanced age, God describes Abraham's problematic situation in reference to the land as "אֶרֶץ מְגֻרֶיךָ". He is a stranger in the land he has been promised to inherit and he has no legal right to the land beyond the divine promise. I will present the socio-legal challenge for inheriting the land in the next chapter. God's promise in chapter 17 is partially fulfilled in chapter 23 within Abraham's lifetime, but the fuller extent to which this obligation is fulfilled takes place later in the narrative.

The nature of this covenant as being a בְּרִית עוֹלָם is good news to the survivors of disaster. Moreover the conditions of this covenant, along with the covenant with Noah are different from the Deuteronomic covenant. The obligation that is given to Abraham and his descendants is circumcision. As such, for the survivors of the sixth century, the Abrahamic covenant, namely of the perpetuity of the people and their relationship with the land is established and not abandoned. It creates the possibility that the people will indeed survive while also making sure that there is a level of ethnic differentiation between survivors of exile that protects against assimilation. It is an irrevocable act that allows for the continuation of an ethnic boundary. Moreover, even if intermarriage between Israelites and non-Israelites was practiced it is a pertinent question whether or not non-Israelites could be included in the covenant.

The story of Hagar's bearing of Ishmael explores such an idea. Ishmael is not initially excluded from the covenant made with Abraham, either explicitly or implicitly.

God does not distinguish in his initial promise between the descendants of Abraham. He does distinguish that the heir will come by Sarah. Sarah giving her slave to Abraham so that he might have an heir does have a basis in the Code of Hammurabi.[18] Moreover, circumcision is incumbent not just on Abraham and Isaac but on all members of the household. Infants, including those of slaves and other dependents, are to be circumcised on the eighth day, a rule that is only attested to here and in Lev 12:3. Ishmael is thus circumcised along with the entire household and included among the blessed. Moreover, he receives a personal blessing.

The question of the origins of circumcision as a ritual practice is not known with any degree of certainty. However, it has been suggested that infant circumcision was a later development in the practice of circumcision.[19] The circumcision of infants is only commanded here in 17:10–14, while other older texts (Exod 4:24–26, Gen 34, 1 Sam 18:17–27, and Josh 5:2–9) seem to reflect that circumcision was a rite of passage into maturity, which included marriage and covenantal relationship. Circumcision is established as having been a practice, but the origins of the practice and its subsequent development are largely unknown. However in the Genesis narrative, P establishes infant male circumcision as the sign of the covenant and the origin of the practice for Israelites.

I am less interested in the history of circumcision for the purposes of this thesis than I am in the value that is placed upon circumcision in Gen 17 and its use in the exilic

18. Hammurabi, 144–145. See also Hayiim Angel, "Sarah's Treatment of Hagar (Genesis 16): Morals, Messages, and Mesopotamia," *JBQ* 41:4 (2013), 211–18. There is an interesting tension regarding the surrogacy and subsequent casting off of Hagar and Ishmael. Sympathy is shown to Hagar in Gen 16 by the angel, which seems to suggests criticism of Abraham and Sarah's actions. However, Hagar is also encouraged in chapter 16 to return to the service of Sarah, which suggests support of the local customs. Angel brings out these two views in Gen 16.

19. William H. Propp, "The Origins of Infant Circumcision in Israel," *Hebrew Annual Review* 11 (1987): 355–70.

period. Circumcision becomes a means of differentiation of Israel from its Assyrian and Babylonian captors. Many of Israel's neighbors seem to have practiced circumcision, and the practice is itself more ancient than the descriptions in the Bible. The first extant evidence of circumcision are the three warrior statues in northwest Syria, which depict circumcised males and are dated to 2800 BCE.[20] Circumcision was also practiced in Egypt in the admittance of males into the priesthood, and it has been speculated that Israel inherited its practice from Egypt.[21] Whether or not that assertion has any merit, circumcision seems to have taken on greater socio-ethnic, theological, and symbolic weight as is indicated by the command given here. The climax of the importance of circumcision can be seen by the Maccabean revolt, which was directly instigated by Antiochus IV's outlawing the practice (1 Macc 1:48). Israelites were deeply committed to the practice of circumcision during the Second Temple period. And, as is described in the New Testament, circumcision was one of the major religious and ethnic challenges presented by the budding multiethnic Christian movement.

In Israel, circumcision took on greater significance during the exilic period and postexilic period for two reasons: (1) as surrounding peoples ceased to practice circumcision, it became a practiced that distinguished Israel, and (2) it was one of the mechanisms for the survival of the people who were victims of the deportations and mass immigrations of the period.[22] For people who are under threat of assimilation, ethnic markers, and in Israel's case, theological markers allowed for survival as a deported and

20. Jack M. Sasson, "Circumcision in the Ancient Near East," *JBL* 85.4 (Dec. 1966): 473–76.

21. Sasson, "Circumcision," 473.

22. Jakob Wöhrle, "The Integrative Function of the Law of Circumcision," *The Foreigner and the Law: Perspectives from the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East,* eds. Reinhard Achenbach, Rainer Albertz, and Jakob Wöhrle (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2011), 71–87.

occupied group. Circumcision became more important during the Diaspora because of its function in maintaining Israel's distinct identity in a way that was not tied to the cult in Jerusalem.[23] Further, during the resettlement period, circumcision provided a method for integrating foreigners who had settled in the land into the worshipping community.[24] Ishmael is himself circumcised and included tangentially into the community.

Circumcision and its increase in importance in the community can be directly attributed to the multiple destructions and deportations of the period, despite the origins of the practice being much more ancient. In Gen 17, direct theological weight is given to the practice of circumcision. Circumcision is given as the obligation of all males within Israelite society for the continuation of the covenant. With the society also being patrilineal, the covenant is kept track of and maintained through the father's line. Abraham is told to circumcise all the males, which will culminate with the circumcision of Isaac. The entire household is circumcised in what must have been a brutal and bloody affair. The theological weight that is given to this event is emphasized in the text. וְהָיְתָה בְרִיתִי בִּבְשַׂרְכֶם לִבְרִית עוֹלָם The covenant is described as being in Abraham and his family's (including his dependents) flesh. The sign of the covenant is physical and thus a symbolic reminder of the theological reality that God's covenant is לִבְרִית עוֹלָם.

Thinking of the covenant as perpetual offers great hope to people in exile who are answering the question of their own covenant status. P's answer to this question is that the Israelite males have themselves a visible sign that this is an everlasting covenant on their bodies. *In* their flesh is the sign of an everlasting covenant. During the exilic and

23. Wöhrle, "Circumcision," 86–87.

24. Wöhrle, "Circumcision," 85.

post-exilic periods the theological question is answered, and there is potential for reflexive understanding. Other authors during this period make similar moves to suggest that God has not abandoned them but is still committed to them.

The practice of circumcision as described in P bears marks of reflexive interpretation to attribute the origin of practices that have been in place to divine command. The practice is not something that should be abandoned when it is socially unpopular, or under pressure from surrounding cultures; its symbolic meaning gives it staying power and provides the community with an identity marker that can be maintained so that the ethnic identity of Israelites survives even in the experience of the destruction of Israel's land, cities, and sacred sites.

The penalty for not being circumcised is also weighty. Circumcision was not a matter of preference, although there is evidence that some Jews did attempt to reverse their circumcision in order to more fully participate in Hellenistic culture.[25] The penalty for not being circumcised meant that one would be cut off from Israel (Exod 12:43–49). Not only would the uncircumcised person no longer be a part of the community, but they would also not be able to receive the blessings that came with the covenant, namely progeny and land as an inheritance. Thus to be an uncircumcised male Israelite was to not be an Israelite. During the exile there was, therefore, a strong motivation to continue the practice of circumcision in order to maintain social cohesion, but also to maintain a proper relationship with God. Circumcision could therefore be described as a mechanism of survival for the religious and ethnic identity of Israel during the disasters of the exilic and post-exilic period.

25. See Josephus, Ant. 12.237-41; 1 Macc 1:15; 1 Cor 7:18.

Circumcision carried the social weight of ethnic identity and the theological weight of being a reminder of the covenant faithfulness of God, but it also served as a symbol for the general moral faithfulness of the people of Israel. Ezekiel refers to foreigners who are "uncircumcised in heart and in flesh" as being improperly admitted into the sanctuary (Ezek 44:1–9). Jeremiah describes the ears of the people of Judah as being "uncircumcised" because of their unwillingness to listen (Jer 6:10). In the Holiness code, the fruit of the trees that are under three years old is to be regarded as uncircumcised and inappropriate to eat (Lev 19:23).[26] Circumcision and uncircumcision are themselves metaphorized into categories of faithfulness and unfaithfulness. The metaphorization of this practice, not just in these other texts but also through the signification of the practice in P, creates an atmosphere where the practice becomes a lens through which life may be interpreted and through which hardships may be endured.

In the introduction, I described how the Armenians who immigrated to America to survive the genocide coped with the trauma that they experienced. When they immigrated to America they did not assimilate into the culture, but rather maintained their distinct identity and culture through observance of religious festivals and rites as a method of social survival. Circumcision in this instance is able to function in a similar role. P's unique narrative of the institution of circumcision supplies the theological and social weight that allowed for it to become a necessary marker of the Jewish people.

Because of the religious and social importance of circumcision in Gen 17, P's narrative of the institution of this practice can be viewed in the social process of recovery through the incorporation of trauma into a new narrative. The trauma that is experienced

26. See Philo, Leg. 1.1–11. He states that this is metaphorical for sexual discipline.

and motivates P is not shown on the surface. But Gen 17 makes a move forward in response to the background traumas to create a "new self" for Israel.[27] The trauma is fresh within the collective memory of Judah, but it no longer monopolizes the imagination of the traumatized. The corporate imagination leans towards methods of resistance and survival as a people, while providing a narrative that incorporates theological lessons for the future of Judah.

Ishmael's Covenantal Status

The first words that Abraham speaks in Gen 17 are "O that Ishmael that might live in your sight" (v. 18). After Sarah has been promised by God that she will bear children, Abraham intercedes on Ishmael's behalf, that Ishmael might be the conduit of God's covenant. Abraham's speech here can be described as an objection to God's promise to Sarah, but also it reveals a level of concern for Ishmael in regards to the covenant. God's response to Abraham is with the negative אֲבָל, which allows for the counter-affirmation that Sarah will bear Isaac and that his covenant will be with Isaac and his descendants. Isaac also receives his name as a mnemonic device that reminds Abraham of his response to God's promise. Isaac's name is similar to Abraham's in that the given name describes features of their lives.[28]

Verse 20 reveals that God has indeed heard Abraham's prayer regarding Ishmael and states that he too will receive similar blessings that are given to the patriarchs. He will be blessed with wealth and progeny. He will become a great nation with twelve chieftains as children, who are named in Gen 25. As such, Ishmael is a mirror image of

27. Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery,* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 202–3.

28. Astori, "Avra(ha)m," 36.

Isaac in terms of the blessing of progeny. The piece of the covenant that is missing from Ishmael's blessing but which is given to Isaac is the promise of land. Furthermore, it is made explicitly clear in the text that the blessing and covenant of God are not equivalent to one another. In verse 21 it is stated, "וְאֶת־בְּרִיתִי אָקִים אֶת־יִצְחָק". The covenant is not for Ishmael. It is also interesting that the detail is added that Isaac will be born to Sarah the following year, which anticipates the non-P material in Gen 18.

With the promise given and the covenant obligations of both parties set, the theophany is concluded and the chapter ends with Abraham's immediate faithful response in circumcising all the males of his household. Special emphasis is given to the circumcisions of both Abraham and Ishmael with age notices of Abraham being ninety-nine and Ishmael thirteen at the time of their circumcisions.

The role and covenant status of Ishmael would have been significant to the readers in the sixth and fifth centuries. The Kedarite Arabs are described as descendants of Ishmael in his genealogy, and they had displaced Edom and become Israel's neighbors, settling in Gaza.[29] Moreover, during the resettlement period, the sheik Geshem who was the chief of the Kedarite alliance was a major opponent of Neh (2:19; 6:1–2, 16).[30] Ishmael's status in regards to the covenant is thus extremely important in the exilic and post-exilic period. Are the descendants of Ishmael members of the covenantal group? It is stated in vv. 4–6, 16 that Abraham is going to be an אַב הֲמוֹן גּוֹיִם. Furthermore the list

29. Ephraim Stern, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible: The Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian Periods (732–332 B.C.E.),* Vol. 2, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 420. The Edomites were pushed northward, filling the vacuum created by the destruction of the Kingdom of Judah.

30. Stern, *Archaeology,* 420. The inscriptions of Geshem and Qainu, the son of Geshem, were discovered at Dedan in North Arabia and Tell el-Maskhuta in Egypt. Qainu is designated by these inscriptions to be a "Qedarite." And thus, Geshem was probably not the head of the Nabataeans.

of descendants of Ishmael in Gen 25 reveals that Abraham's status as a father of nations is true in regards to both his sons, Isaac and Ishmael.[31] Does then the reply to Abraham in v. 19 imply that the multitude of nations will only proceed from Isaac's descendants, or does it negate the earlier statements that Abraham would be an ancestor to multiple nations including Ishmael? I think not; Ishmael's circumcision includes him into the covenant, but a serious distinction is made between Ishmael's covenantal status and Isaac's. Ishmael is not totally excluded, but rather included and bears the sign of the covenant along with the rest of Abraham's household.[32]

Genesis 17 explores the relationship between the Israelites and their distant relatives in regards to who the covenant extended to in the circumstances of the barrenness of Sarah. Moreover, during this period, there are multiple groups vying to settle in the land of Israel and Judah.[33] As such, the question of rightful inheritance of the land finds its way into the relationship between the increasingly multicultural and multiethnic experiences of those for whom the possession of the land is not a settled question. In Gen 25:13 Kedar is listed as one of Ishmael's descendants. This reference would have immediate contextual application during the resettlement period, as is evidenced in narrative in Neh 6. Genesis 17 provides a clear answer for this question, namely, that the descendants of Isaac, and not Ishmael, are the inheritors of the covenant, which includes the land of Israel as an inheritance. Ishmael, as I have already described, is included as a member of the covenant and will become fruitful and be an ancestor to

31. Mark Brett, "The Priestly Dissemination of Abraham," *Hebrew and Ancient Israel* 3.1 (2014), 87–107.

32. Brett, "Dissemination"106.

33. Stern, *Archaeology,* 353.

his own descendants, but it is through the offspring of Sarah that God will make a covenant.

Blenkinsopp argues for the hypothesis that the two accounts of Sarah sending Hagar away contribute to Ishmael's exclusion from the land promises in Gen 17.[34] In Gen 16, Hagar is sent away for her distressing Sarah, and in Gen 21 Hagar and Ishmael are both sent away due to Ishmael's actions toward Isaac. Genesis 21 and Gen 16 both have a majority of non-P material, but 16:1, 3, 15–16 and 21:2–5 are P material, so at the very least Rp had a hand in the narratives. In the case of Gen 16, Isaac and Ishmael are not yet born, but whether the son fathered by Abraham through the slave Hagar will be an inheritor of Abraham or blessed by God is answered. Hagar receives the promise that Ishmael will be an ancestor to peoples, and she is told to return to Sarah. The promise of land is absent from Gen 16. The P material here bookends the non-P material, and in Gen 21, only verses 2–5 are P material, but they describe the birth of Isaac and his circumcision. God maintains his promise in the timeline of Isaac's due date, and Abraham is faithful in his covenant obligations toward Ishmael. It is at this point in the story that Hagar and Ishmael part ways from Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac. This narrative provides an explanation for the divergence in ancestors and how Ishmael came to be separated from his family. As such, it ties up Ishmael's narrative, with exception to the fulfillment of God's promise to him, by describing his descendants in chapter 25. The question of whether the descendants of Ishmael or Isaac have rights to land finds its greatest significance in the resettlement period.

34. See Joseph Blenkinsopp, "Abraham as Paradigm," 236–38.

Despite the trauma that is inflicted upon Hagar and Ishmael by Sarah and Abraham's hesitancy to send Ishmael away, it is explained that God provides for their needs in the desert and will indeed be with Ishmael to make him into a great nation (vv. 13, 18). Ishmael eventually is separated from Isaac both geographically and socially. He settles in Paran and marries an Egyptian, which are both signs that he is not part of the ancestral family. He has no further ties to the land, and his marriage is exogamous. Even though this material is separate from the P material, and separate from Gen 17, Rp blends these narratives together and is able to make certain claims that deal with the trauma that Israel and Judah have suffered.

The concern for the rightful heir in Gen 17 shows a theological concern for questions of survival and continuance. Within the text, will Abraham and Sarah have their own children, or will Abraham's descendants have to come from Sarah's maidservant? For Israel, the question remains as to whether the continuance of the Israelite people matters in regards to the covenant, or whether the covenant can be fulfilled through neighboring related peoples. This is a fundamental question during the resettlement period. This text is in my estimation earlier than the post-exilic date that is often given for it. The question of whether there would be direct descendants to inherit would have been important during the period after the destruction of Israel and the multiple deportations of the sixth century, and it is here answered theologically and reflexively.

Summary

Genesis 17 shows enough similarities with the other covenantal texts in Genesis for there to have been dependence upon non-P covenantal texts. It duplicates events and promises of Gen 12 and 15 without an awareness that the events and promises have

already been given. There are also significant differences between the texts, and thus it is my estimation that Rp connects these once separate narratives by placing them together in the narrative and supplying bridge material.

One of the bridging materials is the revelation of the divine name El Shaddai to Abram. The tetragrammaton is used from the perspective of the narrator, but Abraham is introduced to God as El Shaddai. The use of El Shaddai as a divine name differs in its use in this text from its use in other exilic and later texts in that God is not associated with judgment here but with promise. Throughout the narrative in Genesis and Exodus, the divine names are brought together to refer to a single deity. Where perhaps they were originally different in referring to separate deities, El, El Shaddai, and YHWH are all described as the same God in the Genesis narrative. And the geographical origins and associations are theologically harmonized.

The covenant is given by God to Abram, the names of Abram and Sarai are changed, and circumcision is given as a perpetual sign of the covenant. God's obligations for his covenant include blessing Abraham and Sarah with descendants and land. The promise of land is not yet fulfilled, but the promise of a child in their late age is soon to be fulfilled. Ishmael is already born, but God is explicit that the child of Abraham and Sarah will be the heir to the covenant. These topics are of major importance in the Genesis narrative for the continuation and location of Abraham and his family. But they also are of the utmost importance for the community living through the disasters and displacement of the sixth century. The question of progeny is equivocal to the question of survival, and markers of identity like circumcision provide not only a ritual that prevents assimilation but also an embodied reminder of God's covenant obligations when any kind of future is uncertain.

My argument for this text is that it was produced at a time when the future of the land of Judah and the identity of the Israelite people was uncertain. As such, reading Gen 17 through a traumatic lens allows for possible meanings for this text during periods of significant uncertainty.

CHAPTER IV

THE DEATH OF SARAH AND THE CAVE OF MACHPELAH

Genesis 23 is the final Priestly scene of Abraham's life. Sarah has died and Abraham succeeds in purchasing land from the resident Hittites. There is much within this chapter worth exploring, so I am limiting myself to only a few topics. The first topic is how Gen 23 relates to P. The second topic is the emphasis on the legality of the purchase of land. Thirdly, I will explore the ethic that Abraham embodies as a גר ותושב. And finally, I will describe the possession of the land in Gen 23 as a אֲחֻזַּת עוֹלָם.

Genesis 23 in P

Genesis 23 is more difficult than Gen 17 to date for several reasons, but there is a greater difficulty in establishing whether this chapter consists of P or non-P material. Chapter 23 has within it many of the distinctive features of P material. The age and death notice of Sarah bears striking resemblance to the age and death notices of other characters in P (Adam–Noah Genealogy 5:5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, 23, 27, 31; Terah 11:32; Abraham 25:7). Despite bearing a similarity to P, it has been argued strongly that Gen 23 is not actually original to P.[1] Blum has argued for this position that the texts that refer to the cave of Machpelah are not original but are rather expansions upon the burial notices. Genesis 35:29 illustrates an instance where a reference to the cave of Machpelah is missing from the burial notice. Blum suggests that the absence of any reference to the

1. See Erhard Blum, *Die Komposition der Vätergeschichte,* WMANT, (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verl., 1984), 441–46.

cave of Machpelah in 35:29 is because the references to the cave of Machpelah were Priestly expansions that were added later to the stories. The story also does not have a non-P parallel to which it can be compared. Even Blum gives Gen 23 and Gen 14 relatively few words when describing their place in the composition history because of their difficulty to date and analyze. I will attempt to describe the difficulties with associating Gen 23 with P.

One major seam in Gen 23 is that there does not seem to be any determinable themes or foci in verses 3–18 that have already been established in Genesis. There is not an explicit interpretation in Gen 23 that suggests that this is a fulfillment of the promise of land given in Gen 17. Instead, the focus of the chapter is upon the legitimacy of the transaction for the purposes of burying the matriarch. There is not any reference to God or use of the divine name. Many of the traditional conventions of P are not present. There is no *tôlĕdôt* formula that serves to bridge the gap. Only the age and death notice seem to be shared with other P texts. Westermann asserts that verses 1 and 2 are the only original components to chapter 23, which would have immediately been followed by verse 19.[2] If Westermann's suggestion that v. 19 is indeed original to P, then the rest of chapter 23 is an explanation for how Abraham would have come to acquire the cave. Westermann makes the point that the attached theme comes in Ephron's imperative for Abraham to "Bury your dead!"[3] Or was the acquisition of the cave illegitimate? That there might have been questions surrounding the legal acquisition of the cave is solely speculative, but it represents a possible reason for including this pericope between the death and burial

2. Claus Westermann, *Genesis 12–36* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1995), 371.

3. Westermann, *Genesis,* 371.

notice of Sarah. Because of the major differences in content between Gen 23 and the rest of the P material, there has gained quite a consensus that Gen 23 is not original to P.[4] Westermann's solution is that it is the emphasis on burial that connects the P framework to the narrative included in this text.[5]

The historical criticism of this text began with brief comparisons of the land purchase details to ancient Near Eastern Parallels. Mayer Lehman in 1953 dated Genesis 23 to the Late Bronze age by arguing that the descriptions of Abraham's purchase of the cave in Gen 23 have striking comparative ties to Hittite legal codes of the same period.[6] The laws in question are no. 46–48, and 169. He based his argument on the notice of trees in verse 17. The number of trees on a piece of land was important, and he used this to support his thesis that the feudal structures of Hittite society during the period are reflected in Gen 23.[7]

However, his arguments have been soundly refuted based on the superficiality of the similarities between the Hittite legal codes and description in Gen 23. For instance, the number of trees on a plot of land are important in the Hittite legal code in emphasizing a transference of feudal obligations if an entire property's ownership is transferred to a patriarch, but not if the purchase is only partial, which is indicated in code

4. See also B. D. Eerdmans, *Alttestamentliche Studien,* Vol. 1, *Die Komposition der Genesis* (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1908), 20–23; Rudolf Smend, *Die Erzählung des Hexateuch auf ihre Quellen untersucht* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1912), 10–11; Walther Eichrodt, *Die Quellen der Genesis von neuem untersucht,* BZAW 31 (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1916), 40–43; Christoph Levin, *Der Jahwist,* FRLANT 157 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1993), 193.

5. Westermann, *Genesis,* 371.

6. Mayer Lehman, Abraham's Purchase of the Cave of Machpelah and Hittite Law, BASOR 129 (1953), 15–18.

7. Mayer Lehman, "Hittite Law," 16.

46 and 47. Genesis does not enumerate the trees that are on the land in verse 17; it only states that Abraham owned all the trees on the land. As such, Lehman argues that Ephron was attempting to transfer the feudal obligations, and Abraham was attempting to avoid such obligations.[8] However, the comparisons that Lehman makes of Gen 23 with the Hittite feudal structures are not ethnically nor chronologically limited to a single period, nor, as has been pointed out, are the feudal structures particular to the Hittites.[9] Perhaps most importantly, the Hittites had no geographic presence in Canaan, but were in Anatolia. There is also not an indication that Abraham was attempting to buy solely the cave. In verse 9, Abraham specifies where the cave is located in the field, but Abraham insists on paying the full price. The emphasis in the chapter is that Abraham will not allow it to be gifted to him by Ephron.

One of the later responses to the problem of the socio-historical background of Gen 23 came from Gene Tucker, who made the argument that the legal tradition parallel that stands behind Gen 23 is not Hittite but Neo-Babylonian.[10] Tucker makes the comparison between the Hebrew phrase בְּכֶסֶף מָלֵא and *ana simi-sú gamrüti* to suggest that there is a connection in the emphasis on the full price being paid in regards to a land contract.[11] Recently, the closest parallels that have been found between Genesis 23 and other documents in the ancient Near East are Neo-Babylonian dialogue documents.

8. Lehman, "Hittite Law," 16.

9. Thomas Thompson, *The Historicity of The Patriarchal Narratives* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1974), 295–96.

10. Gene Tucker, "The Legal Background of Genesis 23," *JBL* 85 (1966), 77–84.

11. Tucker, "Legal Background," 80–83.

In these documents, there are striking parallels between the process preceding agreement. There is a proposal, then an agreement, the measuring out of silver, and then a public description of property and a public proclamation of the transferal of ownership, which is witnessed.[12] There is also an emphasis in these documents on the posture and reciprocal actions which take place in the process. The verb "to hear" occurs in both as an appropriate action in the first person, *šemû* in the Babylonian dialogue documents, and שמע regarding Abraham's actions. Abraham also performs gestures of submission and reverence. He bows twice to the Hittites, and the same formulaic phrase is repeated in the Hebrew, וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אַבְרָהָם לִפְנֵי עַם הָאָרֶץ (vv. 7, 12). There are also affirmations of trust in Abraham from the Hittites, "You are a mighty prince among us." The superlative form of אֱלֹהִים is used by the Hittites to describe Abraham here.

Nathan MacDonald makes the observation that, based upon the gestures and the social formula present in the text, Gen 23 is actually a technical example of "haggling" in the ancient Near East, which follows specific rules and customs for the transaction.[13] MacDonald argues that Ephron's opening statement, "No my Lord, I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it" (v. 11), is not an intent to gift the land to Abraham but is instead the beginning of the haggling process.[14] Key to MacDonald's argument is the assertion that Abraham's refusal of such a gift would have been deeply offensive in

12. David B. Weisberg, "A Neo-Babylonian Dialogue Document," *COS* 3.123; idem, *Neo-Babylonian Texts in the Oriental Institute Collection* (Chicago, IL: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2003), 13–14.

13. Nathan MacDonald, "Driving a Hard Bargain? Genesis 23 and Models of Economic Exchange," in *Anthropology and Biblical Studies: Avenues of Approach,* eds. Louise J. Lawrence and Mario I. Aguilar (Leiden: Deo, 2004), 81–90.

14. MacDonald, "Economic Exchange," 76.

the Israelite context of honor and shame.[15] Social relationships and bargaining were highly dependent upon maintaining a balance of gifts and favors.[16] Abraham outright rejects the first offer from Ephron for the gift of the land, and thus MacDonald argues that Abraham is rejecting the social dependence that would ensue if Abraham were to accept the gift of land from Ephron.[17] MacDonald identifies this occasion as an example of "negative reciprocity," where, by insisting to pay for the land in full, he avoids the circumstance of "balanced reciprocity," wherein both Abraham and his descendents would be socially bound to the Hittites.[18]

Abraham is also in a precarious position as a גֵּר־וְתוֹשָׁב. This places him at a disadvantage in the bargaining process. In the social circumstance where social relationships are based upon mutual trust between partners, Abraham has had no prior relationship with the Hittites. As such, Abraham has a need, but he is unable to depend upon previous favors given to the Hittites to leverage his own influence for the land. He is unwilling to place himself in social debt in order to acquire the cave and the land that it rests on. In the cases where there is no established relationship that can be leveraged, the one making the request can describe the negative outcomes that will take place if the request is not granted.[19] Abraham describes the negative outcome simply as that he will

15. MacDonald, "Economic Exchange," 82–85.

16. Oded Tammuz, "Do Me a Favor! The Art of Negotiating according to Old Babylonian Letters," in *Intellectual Life of the Ancient Near East: Papers Presented at the 43rd Rencontre Assyriologique International, Prague July 1-5,* 1996, ed. Jiri Prosecky (Prague: Oriental Institute, 1998), 379–88.

17. MacDonald, "Economic Exchange," 93–96.

18. MacDonald, "Economic Exchange," 93–96.

19. Tammuz, "Negotiating," 383.

have no place to bury Sarah. The text also does not describe why Abraham approached these people and not others. This is perhaps due to Machpelah being understood as ancestral land by the audience, thus an explanation is not necessary.

What follows is Ephron's counter offer of four hundred shekels, to which Abraham agrees. This price has been described as extortionate and perhaps a price that Ephron would not have expected to be accepted; rather, a more reasonable price would have been reached through the haggling process.[20] However, it is impossible to assess this particular plot of land in terms of real value. Abraham maintains social distance and purchases the plot of land at the full price.

The socio-historical context has moved away from the second millennium, which was posited by M. Lehman, and into the Neo-Babylonian period. However, the context of negotiation in the ancient Near East in regards to Gen 23 doesn't narrow the range for the origin of the tradition of this story, as the rituals described in this chapter were practiced for multiple centuries.[21] As such, providing a precise estimate for this story regarding the period or the location is not possible.

The author of Gen 23 is the only hand to describe the Hittites as בְּנֵי־חֵת. The Hittite empire fell in the late Bronze Age and into Iron Age I. The Hittites are mentioned to be among the indigenous populations in the land of Israel.[22] The name given to the Hittites in these texts is הַחִתִּי. However, there are descriptions of the Hittites in Neo-Babylonian royal inscriptions found in Syria-Palestine in which their land is referred to as

20. MacDonald, "Economic Exchange," 95.

21. Tammuz, "Negotiating," 379–82.

22. See Deut 7:1; 20:17; in Judg 1:10, the Hittites are described interchangeably as Canaanites.

māt Ḫatti.[23] This would point to possible confusion between the Semitic tribe, the sons of Heth, in Syria-Palestine and the *Ḫatti* of Anatolia.[24] However, it is probable that the use of the Sons of Heth in Gen 23 refers to the Canaanite hill tribe. This association can be made due to Ephron's name being Semitic rather than Hattic.[25]

Using parallels in ancient Near Eastern literature to date this narrative raises problems. The interaction between Abram and Ephron finds more in common with the Neo-Babylonian dialogue than with Hittite legal codes. Moreover, the narrative is itself an expansion upon P's death notice of Sarah and is the final event of Abraham's life. This suggests that there is behind this text a familiarity with Babylonian influence, and provides in particular an ethic for relationships with other groups of people. If this narrative is a later creation, then the reference to the Hittites incorporates the use of anachronisms. However, there are difficulties with positing a late date for the origin of this narrative. The Hittites referred to here do not seem to be the Hattians of Anatolia, but the Canaanite tribal people. Although the form of purchase does not seem to find much in common with Hittite legal codes, the forms and practices of purchasing land were utilized for centuries, and so are an unreliable method for dating the narrative with any degree of certainty.

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23. Donald Wiseman, *Chronicles of Chaldean Kings (626–556 B.C.) in the British Museum,* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1961). The clay tablet reads, "In the seventh year, the month of Kislev, the king of Akkad Nebuchadnezzar mustered his troops, marched to Hatti-land, and encamped against the city of Judah" (73). And, "In this passage it is clear from the preceding entries that the 'king of Akkad' was Nebuchadnezzar, the 'Hatti-land' was Syria-Palestine, and the 'city of Judah' was Jerusalem" (82). There may be a connection between *Hatti* and *Heth.*

24. See Trevor Bryce, *The Kingdom of the Hittites*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 389–91. This needs to be explored, but 2 Kgs 7:6 seems to indicate that the Hittites are a significant people group comparable to Egypt, rather than a small Canaanite hill tribe.

25. Bryce, *Kingdom,* 390.

Lastly, I will seek to provide the ways in which verses 3–18 interact with P, which frames the narrative with verses 1–2 and 19–20. Rp's practice of using P to frame narratives is present in this text as with many other narratives in Genesis. However, in this pericope the material that is being framed is not J, but is either the creation of Rp or represents a separate tradition that was relevant to Sarah's death and was thus included. The fact that Sarah's death and subsequent burial notice frame this text suggests that verses 3–18 answer the question that is raised in verses 19–20. The Cave of Machpelah is described as her burial place, and there was a transaction between the Hittites and Abraham. P's narrative of Sarah's death raises questions regarding the nature of the transaction that have important implications as the first parcel of owned property in the land of Canaan.[26]

The Legal Purchase of the Cave of Machpelah

Within verses 3–18, attention is given to the formalities of the purchase. There are acts of deference among both parties, official compliments, and diplomacy. The transaction follows a typical pattern of negotiations found in Neo-Babylonian dialogue documents.[27] Genesis 23:3–18 shares parallels in the details of the dialogue documents in the transaction process between Abraham and Ephron. These legal parallels include an emphasis on the act of listening to one another.[28] The request to hear takes place in each of the verbal exchanges between Abraham and the Hittites, and the final affirmation of

26. I follow the conclusions of G. Von Rad, Zimmerli, and Golka here, and will disagree with Westermann, Skinner, and Van Seters.

27. Ephraim Sands, "Two Dialogue Documents in the Bible: Genesis Chapter 23:3–18 and 1 Kings Chapter 5:15–25," *Zeitschrift für altorientalische und biblische Rechtsgeschichte* 8 (2002), 88–130.

28. vv. 6, 8, 11, 13a, 13b, 15, 16a, 16b.

the transaction in verse 16 describes Abraham as יִשְׁמַע. The Neo-Babylonian Dialogue Documents also include these parallels to the following structure in verses 15–18: proposal of terms (15), agreement of terms (16), measuring out of silver (16), public proclamation of ownership transference of property (17), and witnesses to the transaction (17).[29]

The importance of the emphasis on this transaction as legal and formally performed has the following important implications: (1) ownership of the land cannot be contested based upon the method of its acquisition, (2) even when there is no one residing in the land, (3) the land remains legally Israelite, (4) when Israel is in Egypt the ancestors remain buried in the cave embodying a continual presence in the land, and (5) the legal claim to the ownership of this parcel of land implicitly establishes a connection to the land for those who are not close to home. I will now explore these claims.

On the first point, the acquisition of the land matters. There are multiple commands in the Old Testament that condemn theft of an individual's property, which consists of movable and immovable goods.[30] Land falls into the immovable category, but injunctions against the stealing of property through the movement of boundary stones are described.[31] These injunction texts seem to have an assumption that these boundary stones are ancient and inherited. These texts do not describe how commonly this kind of theft took place, but it seems that unscrupulous characters would commit this crime

29. Weisberg, "Dialogue," 13–14.

30. Shalom Albeck, "Property," EncJud 17 (1971): 1146–48; See also John Bright, "The Apodictic Prohibition: Some Observations," *JBL* 92.2 (June 1973), 186–98.

31. See לֹא תִגְנֹב in Exod 20:15; cf. Lev 19:11; and for injunctions against the movement of boundary stones, see Deut 19:14; 27:17; Job 24:2; Prov 22:28; 23:10; Hos 5:10.

against orphans who would not have had someone to contest the claims of the owners of the adjacent property. Against such theft, the land would be restored to its owners when such a case could be proven and carried out.

However, the concern for the cave of Machpelah is not whether the cave was taken by theft, but whether the land was gifted to Abraham by Ephron. If Abraham could have avoided paying the price of 400 shekels and still achieved the end goal of ownership over the land, why does he insist on paying Ephron? Raymond Westbrook states that Abraham's status as a foreigner dwelling in the land precluded him from purchasing and owning land.[32] The permanent transference of property of land in Israel was forbidden, and was to remain in the possession of the tribe.[33] However, Westbrook's claim is contested because his hypothesis assumes that the property laws given later in P apply to the period of the patriarchs. There is also the question of how one could know that foreigners were unable to purchase land during either the patriarchal period or during the Israelite period.

There is a significant debate as to whether the Jubilee was ever practiced, which is another question in regards to the of the permanent purchasing practices of land in Israel. David's purchase of the threshing floor from Araunah the Jebusite is one of just a few examples of land purchase of an Israelite from other inhabitants of the land. David's purchase of the land bears many similarities to Abraham's purchase of the cave of Machpelah; however, it is distinguished because of the cultic importance of the piece of land that he purchases. David purchases the threshing floor on which he builds an altar

32. Raymond Westbrook, "Property and the Family in Biblical Law," *JSOTSup* 113 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 24–35.

33. Lev 25:23; Num 36:9.

from Araunah. This story establishes the sanctity of what would become Solomon's temple through declaring that this site was where the angel of pestilence stopped to spare Jerusalem and that it was David's sacrifice that prevented the plague.[34] The transaction narrative in 2 Sam 24 also serves to legitimize the location of the temple on land that was once owned by the Jebusites through emphasizing that David's purchase was legal and in good form.[35] The cave of Machpelah does not have the same cultic significance; however, the it certainly has its own importance as the permanent burial site of the ancestors.

The other prominent story of the purchase of land is Jeremiah's redemption of his cousin's land in Anathoth. The story of Jeremiah's purchase has parallels with Abraham's purchase; however, the transaction is between Israelites and follows the guidelines for Jeremiah's role as kinsman redeemer. Abraham's and David's transactions take place between themselves as Israelites with the inhabitants of the land, the sons of Heth and the Jebusites. There is also the insistence from Araunah and Ephron that the land be a gift. David insists on paying for the land because he connects the cost of the land with the value of the sacrifice to God.[36] To receive from Araunah both the land and the ox for the sacrifice devalues the location for the purpose of sacrificing. The motivation of David is not shared with Abraham in Gen 23. Abraham does not state why he insists on paying. Neither Ephron nor Araunah state whether the proposition that their land be given as a gift was a serious offer, or whether it is customary to offer the property

34. 1 Chr 22:1; 2 Chr 3:1; 2 Sam 24:16, 25

35. Richard Nelson, "Araunah," *ABD* I, (New York: 1992), 353.

36. 2 Sam 24:24

as a gift, after which the real negotiations begin. Regardless, Abraham seems to insist on purchasing the land as a foreigner for the reasons that are laid out by Westbrook, that he avoids the social obligations that would have come with accepting a favor from the Hittites.[37] This is supported by the preference for endogamy represented in the marriage notice of Esau and Judith, the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and also Basemath, the daughter of Elon the Hittite.[38] Esau's Hittite wives made Isaac and Rebekah's life "bitter." As such, Abraham's insistence on paying for the land suggests a preference for maintained separation from the inhabitants of the land. However, this separation does not preclude interaction with neighboring peoples, but in this case social interdependence is avoided.

It is also important to note that Jeremiah redeems his cousin's field for seventeen shekels, and David purchases the threshing floor and the sacrificial oxen for fifty shekels. Without the distinct features of the land, or a reason given by Ephron, it is impossible to know why the price of purchase is so high when Ephron is, at the same time, willing to give the land to Abraham. This leads me to consider that the offer of the land as a gift may have been motivated by reasons other than the strict transferal of property. Abraham's insistence on acquiring the land via a transaction of silver suggests that the method of acquisition is important. The parallel transaction between David and Araunah suggests that the qualitative use of the land is tied to the method by which it was

37. Westbrook, "Property," 26.

38. Westermann, *Genesis*, 448. Genesis 26:34f and 27:46ff make sense in the context of liquidation of the state of Judah. The inclusion of this into the narrative of P creates a tie between the exilic and patriarchal period for the practice of endogamy.

acquired.[39] It is possible therefore, that Abraham's purchase of the land for 400 shekels is not that he is being taken advantage of by Ephron with the exorbitant price, but rather that the purpose for which the land is to be used, and its association post-transaction, requires a higher price.

Secondly, the purchase of the site as a place of burial does indeed make for a permanent family possession.[40] Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, and Leah are buried in this cave. Their burials are given a particular importance that is not given to other leaders in the Old Testament. Even Joseph's request at the end of the book places importance on being buried with his ancestors. This also motivates the patriarchs to avoid being buried on Hittite land, or Egyptian land in Joseph's case, which would have been problematic.[41] The Cave of Machpelah serves as a permanent location for the interment of Israelite bodies. This is also represented in the language of death and burial as being gathered to one's people in Genesis.[42] By being buried on Israelite land, with Israelite ancestors, one avoids social isolation.[43] When they become slaves in Egypt, and during their period in the wilderness, the bones of their ancestors remain in Canaan and provide

39. Bill Arnold, *1 & 2 Samuel: The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 646–50.

40. Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1956), 250.

41. Saul M. Olyan, "Some Neglected Aspects of Israelite Interment Ideology," *JBL124* (2005): 601–16.

42. Elizabeth Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices and Beliefs about the Dead*, JSOT-Sup 123 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1992), 110.

43. Lisbeth Fried, "Bury Me with My Fathers: A Voluntary or a Forced Return Migration?," *The Long Sixth Century,* eds. Pamela Barmash and Mark Hamilton (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2022), 80.

a permanent location and future hope for Israelite burial. The land remains in perpetuity an Israelite burial site.[44]

Despite Abraham no longer dwelling in Haran, his identification with a particular place seems to be with the land of Canaan. This is primarily understood through the setting of the Genesis narrative. The only activity that takes place in Haran is the act of leaving it. However, Abraham and the patriarchs do not ever belong to a permanent location; much of their lives is spent as sojourners amongst the local peoples. The purchase of land from Ephron suggests that in this transaction, Abraham himself transitions from being a foreigner in the land to being someone with legal and rightful claim to a particular place.[45] P describes this transition in verse 20, that,

וַיָּקָם הַשָּׂדֶה וְהַמְּעָרָה אֲשֶׁר־בּוֹ לְאַבְרָהָם לַאֲחֻזַּת־קֶבֶר מֵאֵת בְּנֵי־חֵת

Particular emphasis should be given to the language that the land passed over to Abraham and became a "possession" to him. Abraham has a legal claim to the land in the field and the cave. That claim is further concretized by the burial of his wife, Sarah. The legal claim becomes a political and sociological reality. He is no longer a sojourner but legally and socially associated with this place. Burial sites root people in a location in a way that changes families.[46]

It is revealed in the P narrative that the terms of this possession are not limited to Abraham alone but extended to his children as well.[47] It is the sepulcher for Isaac, Jacob,

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44. Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis,* 250.

45. Von Rad, *Genesis*, 249–50.

46. Avraham Faust and Shlomo Bunimovitz, "The Judahite Rock-Cut Tomb: Family Response at a Time of Change," *IEJ 58* (2008): 150–70.

47. Gabriel Barkay, "Burial Caves and Dwellings in Judah during the Iron Age II: Sociological Aspects" [Hebrew], in *Material Culture, Society and Ideology: New Directions in the Archaeology of the*

and Joseph as well. This possession is inherited by the children of Abraham, but it is the only tangible connection to the past when Israel is in Egypt. It is the link between the ancestral past to the identity of the people, as well as the hope of a homeland. Once the Israelites have migrated to Egypt, there is the memory that the home of Abraham was in Canaan.

The home of Abraham was not in Ur despite Abraham having grown up and lived there for the first seventy years of his life. Abraham lived one hundred years in the land of Canaan, and with the purchase of the land and cave, he ceased being a foreigner dwelling in the land and became a resident.[48] Abraham lived for thirty-eight years in the land after having purchased the cave to bury Sarah. However, for these thirty-eight years, there is no other narrative in P to describe his life. After this event, the focus of the narrative switches to Isaac, who grows up being settled in the land of Canaan. However there is a sense in P where possession of the land is only partial.[49] Abraham is not described as taking possession of the entire land from this purchase. His offspring continue to sojourn in the land that would later come into the possession of the Israelites. In Gen 28:4 Isaac describes Jacob as residing in the land as an alien but being blessed in order that he might take possession of the land that was given to Abraham. The Cave of Machpelah is not connected here to land that is already possessed by Abraham; however, in P it is the only land that is possessed by Abraham. The scope of God's promise to

Land of Israel [Hebrew], ed. Aren M. Maeir and Avi Faust (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1999), 96–102.

48. Von Rad, *Genesis,* 250.

49. Von Rad, *Genesis,* 250.

Abraham is more expansive than the cave of Machpelah, but the promise is fulfilled within Abraham's lifetime only in his purchasing of the cave.[50]

Furthermore, the purchase of this cave creates a permanent reality for the Israelites in Egypt. It creates a similar reality for the people who have been deported into Babylon.[51] There is a fundamental connection to the land of Canaan that roots the Jewish people to their identity. The land is Israelite even when the people are displaced. A political reality of possession is created that transcends generations and location. Nehemiah states that one of the concerns for returning to Judah is the state of the burial sites. Lisbeth Fried states that the refugees did not in fact return to use the ancestral burial caves, and the archeological evidence seems to suggest that the Iron Age II caves were not used during the Persian Period.[52] The evidence for this is based heavily upon the seals and coins found in Yehud.[53] However, there is evidence within the textual tradition that being buried with one's ancestors has, at the very least, mythical importance.

This is best represented by the accounts of the descendants of Abraham and their great desire to be buried with Abraham. Joseph is a particularly notable example. In this

50. This is Von Rad's central claim of the theology of the text. This differs from Westermann and Van Seters, who claim that this pericope is an etiology for Israelite burial practices. I think it is possible that the text can accomplish both covenantal fulfillment of the land promise to Abraham, and also provide an ethic for burying Israelites on Israelite land.

51. Neh 2:3–5. See also Jacob's request to be buried with his fathers. See also Fried, "Bury Me with My Fathers," 90.

52. Fried, "Bury Me with My Fathers," 90. See also Avraham Faust, "Forts or Agricultural Estates? Persian Period Settlement in the Territories of the Former Kingdom of Judah," *PEQ* 150 (2018): 34–59; and Oded Lipschits, "Achaemenid Imperial Policy, Settlement Processes in Palestine, and the Status of Jerusalem in the Middle of the Fifth Century BCE," In *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian (Achaemenid) Period*, Edited by O. Lipschits and M. Oeming, (Winona-Lake: 2006), 19–52.

53. Oded Lipschits and David S. Vanderhooft, *The Yehud Stamp Impressions: A Corpus of Inscribed Impressions from the Persian and Hellenistic Periods in Judah* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011). See also Fried, "Bury Me with My Fathers," 90.

late novella, emphasis is placed on Joseph's wish to be buried with his ancestors. "And Joseph said to his brothers, "I will die; but God will surely notice you, and bring you up from this land to the land that he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." And Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, "When God attends to you, you shall carry up my bones from here.'" (50:24–25)

Joseph emphasizes that he does not want to be buried in Egypt, where he is not a foreigner. However, in the narrative of the story, the only land which is owned is still just the ancestral land. Joseph is also not ultimately buried with his ancestors, and so he is not "gathered to his people,"[54] but he is buried in Shechem in a plot of land that Jacob bought. However, for this pericope, there is a strong preference for being buried in the land, and not being buried in Egypt.

Jacob too shows this strong preference for being buried in the ancestral land.

> When the time drew near for Israel to die, he called to his son Joseph and said to him, "If I have found favor in your eyes, put your hand under my thigh and promise to deal faithfully and truly with me. Do not bury me in Egypt. When I lie down with my ancestors, carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place." He answered, "I will do as you have said." And he said, "Swear to me," and he swore to him. Then Israel bowed himself on the head of his bed. (Gen 47:29–31)

Jacob insists on being buried with his ancestors, and as his dying wish makes Joseph promise to bury him with his ancestors. This promise is carried out with Jacob and he is indeed buried with his ancestors, unlike Joseph. However, in these narratives it is revealed that the burial place of the ancestors, and by extension the purchase of the burial site, has created roots in the land of Israel for those Israelites who would later reside outside of the land. The sepulcher becomes a place of attachment which gives to the

54. Fried, "Bury Me with My Fathers," 80.

Israelites their identity as Israelites. Fried has argued that the return migration from Babylon was not fueled by a desire to be buried in the land but rather that the ideal of Israelite burials precedes the resettlement period. However, the burial texts in Genesis represent a literary point of attachment for the Israelites who are navigating the challenges of communal identity without a secure attachment to their ancestral land, even if the historical reality of burial in the Persian period does not participate in the literary ideal of Israelite interment.[55]

Family cemeteries and graveyard plots function to create a common point of connection for communities to locate their grief in the Hebrew Bible.[56] The Cave of Machpelah is the paradigm for Israelite burials.[57] Whether or not the place is found, or known about, the Cave of Machpelah is in the land and contains the interred bodies of the ancestors. Furthermore, the burial plot is memorialized in the narratives in Genesis. These memorializations create the opportunity for the ancestral burial land to be idealized by the people connected to these ancestors and to this particular place, even while living (and dying) in a foreign land. To this day, the Cave of Machpelah is identified as the cave under the mosque at Hebron, which was previously a Christian basilica, and before that a Jewish sanctuary.[58]

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55. Westermann, *Genesis,* 376.

56. Westermann, *Genesis,* 376; see also Gabriel Barkay, "Burial Caves and Dwellings," 96–102; and Robert E. Cooley and Gary D. Pratico, "Gathered to His People: An Archaeological Illustration from Tell Dothan's Western Cemetery," in S*cripture and Other Artifacts: Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Honor of Philip J. King,* ed. Michael D. Coogan, J. Cheryl Exum, and Lawrence E. Stager (Louisville: John Knox, 1994), 70–92; and Matthew J. Suriano, *A History of Death in the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

57. Westermann, *Genesis,* 376. He states that the purposes of P revolve around the rites of birth, death, and marriage.

58. Von Rad, *Genesis,* 249.

Genesis 23 thus has reflexive possibilities for the people living in exile to maintain an attachment to the land of their ancestors, despite not being physically present in the land. This is apparent in the stories and intentions of the patriarchs to be buried there. Since Abraham was not Israelite but a stranger in the land, this piece of land also shifts the identity of Abraham and his descendants from sojourners to legal and permanent residents in the land.

אֲחֻזַּת עוֹלָם in Genesis 23

The language of covenant is not explicit in Gen 23. What I will explore finally and briefly in this section is whether the purchase of this land is understood as a fulfillment of the land that was promised in Gen 17. The particular wording that is used by God in chapter 17 is אֲחֻזַּת עוֹלָם. This formulation is not used in Gen 23 to describe this event as a divine act. In fact, the formulation of the gift of land as a perpetual possession is not used except for in the P material in chapter 48, where Jacob describes to Joseph the promise that was given to him at Bethel. Jacob states, "And he 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 possession"' (48:4).

The promise that was made to Abraham and Jacob in P's formulation is restated in Jacob's blessing formula. This P material in the Joseph narrative repeats the language of Gen 17 in regards to the land. Moreover, Jacob still places the fulfillment of this promise in the future. The narratives of P anticipate the eventual settlement of the land.[59] The patriarchal narratives function to anticipate the acquisition of the land in the same

59. Von Rad, *Genesis,* 200.

way that they anticipate the ancestors becoming the ancestors to both Israel and Israel's neighbors.[60]

In the case of Gen 17, the promise given by God that Abraham and Sarah would have a child is fulfilled by the birth of Isaac. This is explicitly promised and fulfilled in the life of Abraham. However, the promise for land and the method of its acquisition is not described in detail in chapter 17. The only connection between chapter 17 and 23 is the statement that the property passed over to Abraham as a possession in 23:18, which uses the word, מִקְנָה. There is perhaps continuity present here in the idea, but the formula is not used in the expansion of vv. 3–18. There might be a connection in the original P material. The term אֻחָזַת is used in verse 20 to refer to Abraham obtaining this land as a possession. The concluding P material lacks the "perpetual" qualifier of describing the possession as אֻחָזַת עוֹלָם. The land purchase is, however, described as a אֻחָזַת in verse 20. Whether this single noun, which is shared between chapter 17 and 23, constitutes a continuation of theme and a fulfillment of promise is unclear.

Westermann, regarding the covenantal language in 17:7–8, states that the covenantal promise of the presence of God is shared to some degree with the promise of land in verse 8.[61] However, the degree to which the language of the "presence of God continuing with Abraham and his descendants" is shared regarding the possession is more complex. Whereas God's promise to be present is absolute, the promise of inheriting the land is not defined in absolute terms.[62] Rp does include the land promise in chapter 17

60. Von Rad, *Genesis,* 200.

61. Westermann, *Genesis,* 262.

62. Westermann, *Genesis,* 262–63.

and does not remove it from the covenant. However, the murky promise of land seems to deal with the difficult reality that Israel does not always have possession of the land. Rp may have the exile and deportations in mind, but also as Genesis plays out, the patriarchs never fully inherit the land, and Israel spends most of the Pentateuch outside of the land. That is a promise fulfilled much later.

Parallel land purchase texts, such as 2 Sam 24:1–14, and Jeremiah 32 provide a theological basis for the purchases made of the land. In special reference to Jer 32, Jeremiah's purchase of his uncle's land at Anathoth carries with it the promise in 32:15 that "Houses and fields and vineyards will again be bought in this land." The promise in that text is explicit. There is also theological significance in 2 Sam 24 tied to the location and quality of sacrifices that are being made. In this text, which is contemporary with Jeremiah, there may therefore be implicit, rather than explicit, promises given. Brueggemann states that "this text, like others in Genesis, has promise just beneath its surface."[63] Von Rad states,

> The complete absence of a religious atmosphere and of pious words which makes our narrative seem "worldly" must not hide the fact that here a fact central to Israel's faith is being described. . . . Possession of the land of Canaan was promised to the patriarchs. They were already living in the land, to be sure, but were not yet in possession of it, i.e. the promise was not yet fulfilled. . . . In death they were heirs and no longer strangers. A very small part of the Promised Land—the grave—belonged to them."[64]

Von Rad's theological interpretation of Gen 23 is implicit rather than explicit. There is not a theological reflection of the event in the text, except in the Priestly conclusion of vv. 19–20. This conclusion does explicitly state that Sarah was buried in

63. Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis*, Interpretation (Atlanta, GA: John Knox, 1982), 196.

64. Von Rad, *Genesis,* 250.

the cave in Hebron, and that the land was purchased from the Hittites, and passed into the "possession" of Abraham. It seems the connection in verse 20 of the land passing into the "possession" of Abraham creates an appropriate circumstance for Sarah to be buried on Israelite land, rather than her having to be buried on non-Israelite property, but it also completes the covenantal arc of Abraham's narrative.

It would be inappropriate to treat the non-theological language of chapter 23 as separate from the theological language that has preceded it. As such, I disagree with Westermann, Van Seters, and Gunkel that the primary function of this legal text is to desacralize worship of the dead.[65] After this narrative of Abraham's life, the next step is that Abraham's own death. I agree with Von Rad's assessment that in the Priestly material, the central themes are covenantal.[66] As such, this was the final thread that needed to be brought together in Abraham's life in P. As P expanded upon the fulfilment of the birth of Isaac as fulfillment of God's promise, so does Gen 23 conclude the covenant obligations of God in Abraham's life. Abraham died having had a son, and also having taken possession of the land.

Summary

The focus of Gen 23 can be reflexively understood to address the concerns of people living in a foreign land dealing with the death of loved ones. The exile was a crucial period when these narratives and stories took on greater significance and became

65. John Van Seters, *Prologue to History*: *The Yahwist as Historian*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 267; and Gunkel, *Genesis: Translated and Interpreted,* trans. Mark E. Biddle (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997), 280.

66. Von Rad, *Genesis,* 250.

a greater point of focus for the Jewish people as a whole.[67] Genesis 23, as either original to P or an interpolation into P, is evidence that these stories were meaningful to the Jewish community in Israel and so were revised into their present form.

However, the ancient nature of these stories allowed for there to be a measure of safety in associating the story of Abraham with the exilic experience. As such, the stories of Abraham provided a point of focus for the exiles to think about and reflect upon their experience of landlessness. The covenantal history of P allowed for the relation and reflection of the people in exile to experience their own trauma through the lens of Abraham's life and to provide an ethic for action. The status of Abraham as a sojourner who had to purchase land establishes a parallel with the people living in a similar situation. Genesis 23 creates, in Freud's terms, a "screen memory," which helps the people cope with their experience through interacting with Abraham's life.[68] In Gen23, there is a dynamic depiction of an Israelite relationship with a Hittite. Great civility and transactional conventions are followed, but Abraham maintains social independence from the Hittite community. He buries Sarah in an Israelite sepulcher, and pays a high price to do this. There is more to discuss in Gen 23 than the tradition history. Perhaps just as important is the fact that Gen 23 was found to be profoundly meaningful to traumatized people.

67. David Carr, *Holy Resilience: The Bible's Traumatic Origins* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 92.

68. Sigmund Freud, "Screen Memories," *Sigmund Freud: The Collected Works,* ed. Alix Strachey, James Strachey (London, UK: Hogarth Press, 1899), 43–63.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In this final chapter I will attempt to summarize the major points of the preceding chapters, identify common themes, and finally reflect theologically on the subject matter. More precisely, I will attempt to bring out the traumatic thread in Gen 17 and 23, which has been the focus of this project.

Chapter I

In chapter one, I described trauma in its collective dimensions, and I described the methods often used for recovery. The main goal for recovering from trauma is associating the traumatic memory into the "ongoing narrative of life."[1] The move of an individual or a community towards association of their trauma and out from dissociation takes place in many ways, but the memory of trauma must be reconstructed and dealt with. Judith Herman gives the three step process for recovery of trauma: (1) safety, (2) remembrance and mourning, and (3) reconnection.[2]

Addressing the trauma from an established position of safety is important for the association of the trauma because the feeling of danger is experienced even after the danger is passed. Thus, safety must be established before confronting the trauma directly. The therapeutic application of trauma care intentionally engages in these practices to help patients confront and integrate their trauma. However, in the case of Gen 17 and 23, we

1. Bessel Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score,* (New York: Penguin Books, 2014), 183.

2. Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 156.

are dealing with ancient texts, which have their own history and social context. Ancient peoples did not have an awareness of Judith Herman's rules for trauma recovery. However, they had and utilized social and communal tools for engaging with their traumatic experiences. Communal rituals are arenas where the trauma is able to be spoken of, reflected upon, and digested. The identity of the community is changed through acute trauma, but there are groups within the community who are able to distill the traumatic experience and provide narratives that integrate the trauma into the consciousness of the community. [3]

A society can undergo this process unconsciously, meaning that every member of the community may not directly interface with the communal trauma at the same level. However, there are those who do engage in the narratival work as representatives of the community.[4] The symbolic and narratival work that is done by these representatives is performed publicly in as many public arenas as a community may have, and they are ultimately deemed successfully persuasive by the community if the community adopts the symbols and narratives that are created by the representatives. In this thesis, I have argued that P as a whole and Rp as an editor/redactor is such a representative, and that Gen 17 and 23 are such narratives. The narratives presented in Gen 17 and 23 symbolize and metaphorize the trauma that is experienced through a narrative that provides answers to the existential questions that were raised in the wake of the multiple exiles experienced by the Israelite people.

3. Jeffrey Alexander, *Trauma: A Social Theory,* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2012), 15.

4. Alexander, *Trauma,* 15..

Chapter II

Prior to dealing with Gen 17 and 23, it was necessary that I provide a literary overview of P in Genesis. Genesis is a cohesive narrative and it has a particular place in the Tetrateuch and also the canon of Jewish and Christian scriptures. I did not deal with the larger setting of Genesis in the canon of scripture, or even in the Tetrateuch. Instead, I attempted to concisely deal with Gen 17 and 23 in their positions within the Priestly source in Genesis. In seeking to answer the question of whether these two chapters in Genesis answer traumatic questions, a natural question is raised concerning which historical traumas the text is referring to. This requires discussing the possible date of these texts.

Much has been written at great length discussing whether P is exilic or post-exilic. Avi Hurvitz has argued convincingly that P may even be pre-exilic.[5] My response to this question is that in regards to whether these two chapters are dealing with trauma, it does not matter. An early date for P is compatible with the argument that P is speaking about trauma, as the land of Israel was in a state of constant flux and attack. By the middle of the 9th century BCE. the threat of the Assyrians was strong enough that Israel, Judah, and the kings of Syria and Palestine formed an alliance to combat Assyria. Ahab is listed amongst the alliance of losers of the Battle of Qarqar against Shalmanesar III in 853 B.C.E.[6] Assyrian deportations of Israelites began in the late 730s, again making an early date possible. More to the point, dating P to a particular century with any degree of certainty is nigh impossible, and thus situating chapters 17 and 23 is fraught with the

5. Avi Hurvitz, *A Linguistic Study of the Relationship Between the Priestly Source and the Book of Ezekiel: A New Approach to an Old Problem,* CahRB 20 (Paris: Gabalda, 1982),150.

6. James A. Craig "The Monolith Inscription of Salmaneser II," *Hebraica* 3.4 (1887): 201–32.

same challenges. As I have previously stated, however, this does not preclude these texts from speaking about trauma.

I have argued that the literary setting of P is originally a separate source from the non-P material but that there was a priestly redactor who was responsible for combining the materials. P shows enough continuity in its concern for the priesthood that it can be distinguished as having a theological vision distinct from non-P. Within P there is an awareness of the traumas that have been experienced, and its narrative deals with these issues. One of the ways this is shown is through the *tôlĕdôt* formulas. The *tôlĕdôt* formulas are distinctively an element of P, and they carry narrative weight and provide momentum for the narrative of Genesis. The *tôlĕdôt* formulas speak about the continuance of family and the fulfillment of God's promises for the ancestral family, and they contain seeds of optimism that the promise of land, blessing, and progeny are being fulfilled.

Chapter III

Genesis 17 is the P narrative of God's promise to Abraham. There are two major topics within this chapter of the thesis. I first discussed the contents of the covenant and then secondly I discussed Ishmael's inclusion into the covenant.

The pericope begins with God revealing himself to Abraham as El Shaddai. It has been posited that the divine name El Shaddai is connected to judgment, and in other texts that is true; however, in Gen 17 the name that God reveals to Abraham is not connected

to divine judgment but to hope, promise, and blessing.[7] Furthermore, Abram and Sarai's names are changed to reflect the identity and purpose given to them by God.

The covenant itself has several elements with obligations for both parties. God promises progeny and land to Abraham and Sarah, and he declares that this covenant will be an everlasting covenant that will extend to Abraham's descendants. This is important because it means that God still has obligations to children of Abraham, namely progeny and land. Progeny (and land, although to a lesser extent) are necessary for the survival of a community. These issues became particularly acute once the exiles began in the eighth century. The question of whether or not Israelites would survive forced migrations was open-ended. However, in Gen 17, P makes extremely clear that it is through Isaac and not Ishmael that the covenant blessings will be fulfilled.

The covenant obligations for Abraham's family were circumcision of the males. This was the barrier for inclusion into the covenant. This too has implications for people who are suffering a corporate crisis of identity. Circumcision is an embodied reminder that a person is distinct in their identity. It is not reversible, and it cannot be assimilated. As important as land is for identity, circumcision is an identity marker that is able to transcend geographic boundaries. Thus an Israelite could live outside of the land but still be a participant in the everlasting covenant that God had made.

A question that could have been left hanging in the narrative is whether Ishmael could be included into the covenant. God firmly answers Abraham's question regarding Ishmael that Ishmael is not the child of promise, but he is not excluded from the

7. Austin Surls, *Making Sense of the Divine Name in the Book of Exodus: From Etymology to Literary Onomastics,* Bulletin for Biblical Research Supplement 17 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2017), 1–24; 83–115.

covenant. He is circumcised along with the rest of the males in the household, and so shares in the covenant insofar as he is connected to Abraham. God's answer regarding Ishmael versus a child born of Abraham and Sarah answers the hypothetical question of whether the continuance of the Israelite people is necessary, or whether God will substitute another nation for Israel. In this chapter, this is answered by God providing Isaac to Abraham and Sarah. However, it poses an interesting question regarding the relationship of Israel to neighboring peoples. Ishmael's descendants may not be automatic members of the covenant in the same way as Israelites, but their ancestor was included in the covenant, cared for, and blessed by God.

Chapter IV

Genesis 23 is an interesting pericope for exploring trauma. In this chapter Sarah has died and Abraham must find a place to bury her. There is a connection here to the later people of Israel, namely that Abraham must find a place to bury Sarah in a place where he is not a landowner. Certainly during the multiple exiles there were parallels in the lives of deported Israelites.

What follows in chapter 23 is a negotiation between Abraham and Ephraim for a piece of land that contains the cave of Machpelah. Abraham's acquisition of the cave was in some sense an etiological explanation for an ancestral site.[8] It also follows that this would have provided an ethic for Israelite interment. It is unclear, however, whether during the resettlement period Israelites used ancestral tombs to bury their dead, and that the Iron Age II burial caves were not used during the Persian period.[9] As such, the ethic

8. Claus Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1995), 376.

9. Lisbeth Fried, "Bury Me with My Fathers: A Voluntary or a Forced Return Migration?," *The Long Sixth Century,* eds. Pamela Barmash and Mark Hamilton (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2022), 90.

for Israelite burial in Gen 23 may be an earlier ethic, or as is the case with other ethics, it may not have had widespread adoption during the Persian period despite its inclusion in this text and others.

Within the narrative this site has a permanent importance for the patriarchs and for Israel as ancestral land. In regards to the narrative of P, the possession of the land of Israel is a promise that is not fulfilled until much later in the life of the nation of Israel. Within the narrative that follows, Israel as a nation lives in Egypt and then in the wilderness. The cave of Machpelah is the place where the ancestors are buried, and Joseph, as a model of a faithful Israelite in Egypt, longs to be buried with his ancestors. The cave of Machpelah serves as a point of permanent attachment for Israelites to the land of Israel, even when they have been forced to live outside of the land. Traumatized communities often preserve their connection to their homeland, especially when they have been forcibly removed from their land. A modern parallel to this phenomenon is the Native American populations and the many forced migrations they endured. Ancestral land plays an important role for the formation of a community's identity. The cave of Machpelah is an anchor for the Israelites and a point of connection between the ancestors and their descendants. It connects the displaced present to the memory of land and promise.

This brings me to a point at which I disagree with Westermann and Van Seters. Genesis 23 does not just represent an ethic for Israelite burial practices, although it can carry this function as well.[10] Instead, I am in agreement with von Rad that Gen 23 is a

10. John Van Seters, *Prologue to History*: *The Yahwist as Historian* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 267; and and Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1910), 280.

natural fulfillment of God's covenant obligations to Abraham, which were introduced in Gen 17. Abraham does indeed come to possess a piece of land in Israel in his lifetime. Without Gen 23, Abraham does not possess the land of promise prior to his death. This is expressly communicated in verse 20 with the description that the land passed into Abraham's "possession." This concludes a covenantal arc in Abraham's life in P. He receives the promise of a son, blessing, and land, and each of these he has received. Moreover, he has been faithful in his covenantal obligations. Thus he is able to be buried on land that also passes into the possession of his descendants.

Lastly, there is an interesting relationship in this text between Abraham and the sons of Heth. If this narrative provides an ethic for Israelite burial practices, then it may also be stated that it provides an ethic for Israelite–non-Israelite relationships. Abraham negotiates with Ephron tactfully and respectfully. He pays the price that is offered, but in doing so he also maintains social distance and does not accept any favors that might create social debt and dependence. He purchases the cave legally by paying the full price and maintains social boundaries as much as he can while still entering into a negotiation for a place to bury his dead wife. This too has reflexive possibilities for people who are attempting to maintain their communal identity and may be facing the dangers of assimilation. There may be an ethic represented here for Israelite relationships with non-Israelites in a way that allows for Israelites to maintain their identity through avoiding unnecessary social relationships with non-Israelites when they are living as a minority in a foreign land. Maintaining a tightly knit community is necessary for the community's survival against threats of assimilation.

Significance and Theological Implications

Genesis 17 and 23 are arenas in which topics and questions of trauma may be examined. The Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian periods are times of intensity in the life of Israel. The future of Israelite life is uncertain, and questions about survival occur with each generation. Periods of peace were interrupted by extended periods of instability and war. Exile was an ongoing experience.

The trauma of these centuries could be reflected upon in the Jewish scriptures. The stories and memories of the ancestors were natural anchors for the identity of Israel to provide not only a hope for survival, but also a hope for a future where Israel will flourish. In Gen 17 and 23, the themes of barrenness and landlessness are explored. Without children, and without a place for those children, there is little hope for the future. However, in these two chapters there is a common thread that the God who made promises to Abraham has also promised that the contents of those promises will extend to Abraham's descendants. The guarantee that God goes with them is a great source of hope for the exiles.

These stories create a safe place where traumatic issues may be dealt with and explored safely. There is a dialectic in the experience of trauma in that it is both inexpressible but also must be spoken about and expressed. The traumatic events of the Assyrian and Babylonian periods have a space where they can be spoken without being spoken in these texts. These texts can be symbolized for the trauma of later generations, and they are capable of bearing the narrative weight of trauma. Indeed, the trauma of Abraham and Sarah's life is able to share and bear the trauma of others. Their suffering is able to be metaphorized and symbolized and reflexively applied to the situations of later generations.

Freud described screen memories as hiding and shielding the patient from traumas that they may have blocked out from an early age.[11] Screen memories more generally are an unconscious space with which the mind is able to cope with experiences that are beyond the capacity for an individual to deal with. Screen memories are more safe, and although they do not represent the reality of the traumatic experience, they are still associated with trauma and aid the patient in coping with trauma. Genesis 17 and 23 can function in a similar way to screen memories. There is space in these narratives to deal with issues of exile and deportation.

Moreover, through reflexive interpretations, these stories can ultimately help communities and individuals move from disassociation of their trauma towards associating their trauma experience into the wider metanarratives. In Judith Herman's terms, these stories help one move from safety to remembrance and mourning, and finally towards reintegrating traumatic experiences into one's life narrative. P and Rp are social representatives who engage in the traditions to create meaningful narratives that interact with Israelite society. These narratives through their permanence have proven persuasive for the process of meaning-making and identity formation.

Although I have discussed these two chapters at length, I think a final word could be included to suggest that these narratives are not meant to carry all the weight of the traumatic experiences of Israel but are only two pericopes in a much wider matrix of narratives. Genesis 17 and 23 both may bear marks of interpolation. They are part of P's narrative, but they have also been combined into the Genesis document. They have their

11. "Screen Memories." In *Sigmund Freud: The Collected Works.* Edited by Alix Strachey and James Strachey. London, UK: Hogarth Press, 1899. 43–63.

place in Torah, the writings, and the prophets. These two narratives have a place in the larger narrative of Scripture, but of course, these two stories do not communicate the full breadth of Scripture.

There are a few clear implications. The first is that Gen 17 and 23 are not exhaustive in what they describe and communicate in regards to the traumatic experiences of Israel. Moreover, although these narratives function in such a way as to help Israelites associate their trauma, they are first and foremost narratives that communicate truths beyond descriptions of trauma and ways to overcome it. The traumatic experience is situated in a larger narrative that helps to locate the experience and inform the identity of the people who read and hear the story. So although there are aspects of trauma in this text, the story is itself more than a rehearsal of the experience.

Secondly, it is in the wider story of the faithfulness of God that the trauma is situated. How the faithfulness of God is worked out is part of the much bigger story that is being told. There is a cosmic scale at which this story is being told. The traumatic experiences of exile are able to be enfolded into this cosmic story of God's faithfulness, but it is the overarching story of God's faithfulness that takes center stage. This is a narrative with which Israel's trauma is associated in the Scriptures.

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APPENDIX

Individual Dimensions of Trauma

Trauma as a source of study has many different theories and starting frameworks. For the purposes of this thesis, I focused more on trauma in its collective dimensions. And as I have recently learned, the multiple frameworks for trauma are not compatible. However, in my research on trauma theory, individual responses were the starting place for thinking about and observing the effects of trauma. The Sociological is not so easily separated from the psychological and the collective and often not so easily bifurcated from the individual. So in this appendix, with the disclaimer that diagnosing any of the characters in Genesis with PTSD is anachronistic, there is perhaps still something that can be learned in how we might understand the individuals of the ancient past as traumatized. Furthermore, ancient individuals in the past would have coped with their traumatic experiences through the frameworks that were available to ancient peoples.

The research of shell-shocked veterans was a precursor to diagnoses of PTSD, but shell shock was limited solely to victims of war. In 1980, New York psychoanalysts Chaim Shatan and Robert Lifton along with a group of Vietnam veterans successfully lobbied the American Psychiatric Association to create the new diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder.[1] The creation of this diagnosis allowed doctors who were seeing common groups of symptoms to finally see the symptoms as related rather than as

1. Joe L. Stein, "Examining Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and the Plight of Vietnam Veterans," *Iowa Historical Review* 5.1 (2015): 7–22, https://doi.org/10.17077/2373-1842.1028.

stemming from separate causes. All of the symptoms could be grouped under the diagnosis of PTSD. The creation of this diagnosis created a framework that could help veterans and victims of other traumas to cope with a variety of events suffered. They could finally receive the help they and others needed, because their illness had been identified.

The framework of PTSD that was identified through work with survivors of the Vietnam War has since had far-reaching implications for research into the psychology of persons who have suffered violence and trauma. For instance, as I will describe in more detail later in this appendix, memory works very differently in those who are suffering from PTSD than those who are not. For most people, memories of a difficult experience fade, change, and are forgotten; however, people who suffer from PTSD are often unable to leave their traumatic experience behind them.[2]

The research that has been done in the past four decades is immense, and one of the discoveries of this research through brain scans is that overwhelming experiences of trauma leave a physical imprint on the brains and bodies that suffer.[3] The experience of trauma affects the ways in which a person relates to others, to themselves, and to reality.[4] The way that trauma imprints on a person has tremendous effects on their experience in the present, even if their current circumstances are no longer traumatic. One example of this is that a traumatized person's fight/flight/freeze response is affected, and rather than seize an opportunity to escape when it becomes available, their previous experience of

2. Bessel Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score,* (New York: Penguin Books, 2014), 18.

3. Bessel Van der Kolk, "The Body Keeps the Score: Memory and the Evolving Psychobiology of Posttraumatic Stress," *Harvard Review of Psychiatry* 1 (1994): 253–65.

4. Van der Kolk, *Body*, 20.

helplessness or being trapped "short circuits" their ability to escape new dangerous situations. [5]

People suffering with PTSD often find themselves conditioned to not react because of a sense that they are trapped. The circumstance that is calling for a reaction does not necessarily need to be a new dangerous situation, but certain sights, thoughts, smells, and sounds can trigger a response from the amygdala that treats the memories as if the person were currently experiencing a previous traumatic memory.[6] Also when re-experiencing the traumatic event, it has been noted that the speech centers of the brain decrease in function.[7] The response that is observed here is similar to what happens when a person suffers a stroke.[8] The ability to describe the trauma experienced and the emotions and feelings that surface during a flashback becomes impossible. As such, describing "what happened" is impossible, as the experience of trauma is itself preverbal.[9] The words that are spoken in response to trauma do not necessarily make sense. Screaming, howling, and obscenities are common verbal responses to traumatic events.[10] Victims of violence often sit in silence and refuse to speak.[11] Children who

5. S. F. Maier and M. E. Seligman, "Learned Helplessness: Theory and Evidence," *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 105 (1976): 3.

6. Maier and Seligman, "Helplessness," 38–41.

7. Van der Kolk, *Body,* 43.

8. Benno Roozendaal, B. S. McEwen, and S. Chattarji, "Stress, Memory and the Amygdala," *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* 10 (2009): 429–31.

9. Van der Kolk, *Body*, 43.

10. Van der Kolk, *Body*, 43.

11. Jeffrey Kauffman, "Safety and the Assumptive World: Traumatic Loss and What Cannot Be Said," in *Loss of the Assumptive World: A Theory of Traumatic Loss* (New York: PUBLISHER, 2002), 206–7.

suffer are often unable to speak.[12] Moreover, even years later, survivors often have incredible difficulty describing their experience, and when they do, the same feelings of horror, helplessness, fear, anger, and fight and flight instincts are all experienced.[13] Because of the physical reaction a person undergoes when they are forced to recount their trauma, it is difficult for survivors to create an account that rationally describes the event, because any account that they might create cannot fully convey their experience as they lived it.[14] These experiences are rarely logical or follow the rules of narrative. So many survivors will create "cover stories."[15] This is a story that survivors package for retelling when they need to describe the event in public, and it rarely describes the survivor's lived experience.[16]

In regards to these experiences, it is clear that traumatic memories are very different from other memories. The brain responds to the recollection of these memories in different ways, so that recalling traumatic memories is a flashback, whereas recalling memories of events from other important events is much fuzzier. Flashbacks stimulate the brain in such a way that the person is not only recollecting but re-experiencing the traumatic event with excruciating clarity. The brain is not simply recalling memories but reliving them in the present moment.

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12. Linda Goldman, "The Assumptive World of Children," in *Loss of the Assumptive World: A Theory of Traumatic Loss* (New York: PUBLISHER, 2002), 191–202.

13. Van der Kolk, *Body*, 44.

14. Jeffrey C. Alexander and Elizabeth Butler Breese, "On Social Suffering and Its Cultural Construction," in *Narrating Trauma: On the Impact of Collective Suffering* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2011), xi–xxxv

15. Van der Kolk, *Body,* 196.

16. Van der Kolk, *Body*, 43.

As a natural course of study, the methods by which these persons coped with their trauma were also observable. The methods by which these persons have been treated have also been discussed. The remembering and telling of these memories, as well as the incorporation of these memories into a larger narrative, is important.[17] This process of remembering and telling, however, creates a serious tension within the individual. On the one hand, the traumatic memories are indescribable. The response to them is preverbal, and language does not capture the depth of the experience. On the other hand, the path to recovery requires acknowledgment of the wrongdoing and violence. This acknowledgement requires at some level an honest description of what has taken place.

In discussing individual memory and the construction of traumatic memories into coherent narratives, it is important to acknowledge that the traumatic event often exceeds the individual's capacity to respond to the event and process it as memory.[18] Shalev has proposed that those suffering from PTSD's mnemonic process experience the following differences: (1) an alteration of neurobiological processes affecting stimulus discrimination (expressed as increased arousal and decreased attention), (2) the acquisition of fear responses to trauma-related stimuli, (3) altered cognitive schemata and social apprehension.[19]

Traumatic memories in the individual operate differently from stressful memories in one major way. Disassociation is argued by van der Kolk to be the central mechanism

17. Van der Kolk, *Body*, 227.

18. Gabriela Patiño-Lakatos, "Trace and Memory of Trauma: From Bodily Memory to Symbolic Memory," *L'Évolution Psychiatrique*, 84.3 (2019): 45–58

19. Bessel Van Der Kolk, "Trauma and Memory," in *Traumatic Stress: The Effects of Overwhelming Experience on Mind, Body, and Society*, ed. Bessel A. Van der Kolk, Alexander McFarlane, and Lars Weisaeth (New York: Guilford, 2007), 279–302.

that brings about the PTSD disorder.[20] Disassociation as a mechanism for memory retrieval is a different form of retrieval in the sense that the traumatic memories being retrieved are mental imprints of "sensory and affective elements" of the traumatic experience.[21] This falls within the broader spectrum of "implicit," "nondeclarative," or "procedural" memory.[22] This kind of memory differs from the other, "declarative" or "explicit" memory, in that it refers to memories of skills and habits, emotional responses, reflexive actions, and classically conditioned responses.[23] These memories are associated with particular areas within the central nervous system.[24] "Declarative" or "explicit" memory is different from "implicit" memory in that it is responsible for the conscious recollection of facts and events of the individual's life.[25] This form of memory is located in the frontal lobe and hippocampus, and there is significant evidence that it too is affected by traumatic experiences.[26]

What and how a person remembers is an incredibly complex process. It depends on cognitive frameworks that already exist, and individual pieces of information are integrated into these larger mental frameworks.[27] Once this process has been undergone,

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20. Van der Kolk, "Memory," 280.

21. Van der Kolk, "Memory," 280.

22. Larry Squire, *Memory and Brain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 151–74. Also Daniel Schacter, "Implicit Memory, Constructive Memory, and Imagining the Future: A Career Perspective," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 14 (2019): 256–72.

23. Van der Kolk, "Memory," 281.

24. Van der Kolk, "Memory," 281.

25. Larry R. Squire and Stuart Zola-Morgan, "The Medial Temporal Lobe Memory System," *Science* 253 (1991): 1380–86.

26. Van der Kolk, *Body,* 253–65.

27. Bessel Van der Kolk and Onno Van der Hart, "Pierre Janet and the Breakdown of Adaptation in Psychological Trauma," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 146 (1989): 1530–40.

the individual piece of information no longer exists, but is warped and contorted into a combination with similar experiences and also the emotional state of the individual at the time of recall.[28] Thus, the accuracy of memory is entirely dependent upon the individual's condition to store and retrieve that memory.[29] However, when a particular experience is particularly consequential to the individual, accuracy of recall is typically high and consistent over time.[30] For instance, Yuille and Cutshall in their study interviewed witnesses to a murder four to five months after the experience. Each witness had given written statements to the police immediately following the incident. Yuille and Cutshall stated that their results showed that the memories of such horrific events were accurate and detailed, and also that witnessing real trauma created a different sort of memory from those created after witnessing a simulated trauma in the laboratory."[31]

Cultural tragedies seem to differ from the personal experience of tragedy in the decline of accuracy in memories. Brown and Kulik studied the accuracy of memories for events such as the murder of President Kennedy and the *Challenger* explosion, and they concluded that the memories of these events, as tragic as they were, were subject to significant degradation over time, although they did not control for personal effect of the tragedies.[32] They called these memories "flashbulb memories."[33] The evidence seems to

28. Van der Kolk, "Memory," 281.

29. Van der Kolk, "Memory," 281.

30. Van der Kolk, "Memory," 281.

31. Judith Cutshall and John C. Yuille, "A Case Study of Eyewitness Memory of a Crime," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 71 (1986): 291–301.

32. Roger Brown and James Kulik "Flashbulb Memories," *Cognition* 5 (1977): 73–99; Van der Kolk, "Memory," 281

33. Brown and Kulik, "Flashbulb Memories," 73–99.

show that the memories of people who have been diagnosed with PTSD are significantly different from flashbulb memories.[34] The difference in the quality and accuracy of these memories is associated with the secretion of adrenaline to an extent that the event overwhelms the systems at work in memory.[35] When memories of trauma are triggered in laboratories, the systems that are responsible for declarative memories are affected significantly. The frontal lobe and the thalamus shut down.[36] These parts of the brain are responsible for interpreting feelings and emotions coherently, and also interpreting incoming sensory information. In these instances, the explicit memory mechanisms are severely limited, and the implicit, emotional, systems take over.[37] The intense arousal that these situations produce limits the function of parts of the brain that are necessary for storage and integration of information.[38] As a result, the traumatic memories imprint not in logical and coherent narratives, but instead as "fragmentary sensory and emotional traces, images, sounds, and physical sensations."[39]

Van der Kolk states, "traumatized people simultaneously remember too little and too much."[40] Disassociation is the common response with horrific memories. The process of disassociation prevents fragmented memories from becoming integrated into the

34. Van der Kolk, "Memory," 281.

35. James L. McGaugh, "Memory—A Century of Consolidation," *Science* 287 (2000): 248–51; J. L. McGaugh and L. Cahill, "Mechanisms of Emotional Arousal and Lasting Declarative Memory," *Trends in Neurosciences* 21 (1998): 294–99.

36. A. F. Arnsten, "Enhanced: The Biology of Being Frazzled," *Science* 280 (1998): 1711–12.

37. Van der Kolk, *Body,* 178.

38. Van der Kolk, *Body,* 178.

39. Van der Kolk, *Body,* 178.

40. Van der Kolk, *Body,* 181.

autobiographical narrative form of memory that normal experiences create.[41] Association allows for normal memories to be integrated into the whole of stored memories via the process of memory creation.[42] Traumatic memories, on the other hand, are disassociated in that they consist of sensations and emotional fragments. Disconnection and dissociation are not purely psychological effects of trauma, but trauma disconnects and disassociates an individual from themselves and their community.[43] The individual's inner and outer relationships are affected. As such, Mardi Horowitz defines traumatic events as events that cannot be assimilated into the individual's "inner schemata."[44]

Treatment for people suffering from PTSD then consists of a goal for association of traumatic memories into the "ongoing narrative of life."[45] This is one of the therapeutic steps to recovery, and there are many challenges for victims of trauma to get to this stage. However, this is the step that is perhaps most applicable to this thesis, since I am working with texts that I claim participate in the reintegration of traumatic experiences into the collective memory of Israel. The individual's earlier descriptions of traumatic events have been described as pre-narratives.[46] The memories do not have structure or coherence, and certainly not meaning at this stage. The process of constructing the traumatic memory places a serious demand on the victim. They must

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41. James Titchener, "Post-traumatic Decline: A Consequence of Unresolved Destructive Drives," *Trauma and Its Wake* 2 (1986): 5–19.

42. Van der Kolk, *Body,* 182.

43. Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery,* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 51.

44. Mardi Horowitz, *Stress Response Syndromes: PTSD, Grief, Adjustment, and Dissociative Disorders* (Plymouth, UK: Jason Aronson Publishing, 2011), 136.

45. Van der Kolk, *Body,* 183.

46. E. A. Brett and R. Ostroff, "Imagery in Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: an Overview," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 142 (1985): 417–24.

face the horror of their experience as they try to describe the indescribable. The attempt to speak about the unspeakable and visit that which haunts them requires bravery and courage on the part of the victim. Reconstruction must take place deliberately and carefully, and there are steps that need to be taken in order to progress toward reconstruction and reconnection. Judith Herman gives the three step process for recovery of trauma: (1) safety, (2) remembrance and mourning, and (3) reconnection.[47]

Trauma destroys the sense of power and control of the victim and subsequently the victim does not feel safe, even when they are no longer in danger.[48] The first step that Herman lays out for recovery is establishing the survivor's safety.[49] Any attempt to move on to the next steps is futile and even harmful until a reasonable measure of safety has been established. This stage varies according to the survivor's experience, as acute trauma and chronic abuse require different timelines for establishing a reasonable measure of safety.[50] Creating an atmosphere where survivors feel safe is incredibly complex and individualized. The safety of a survivor might be compromised in relation to their own body if they have lost control of their emotions and thoughts.[51] Survivors can also feel unsafe around other persons. In establishing safety, therefore, a helper must seek to address the safety of both the personal and interpersonal spaces. [52]

47. Herman, *Trauma*, 156.

48. Horowitz, *Stress Response Syndromes,* 136.

49. Herman, *Trauma*, 159.

50. Herman, *Trauma*, 160.

51. Herman, *Trauma*, 160.

52. Herman, *Trauma*, 160.

Establishing safety and restoring control to the victim begins with the survivor controlling their own body and then gradually moves toward control of the environment. The survivor begins taking care of their physical needs: food, sleep, and exercise. Maintaining control versus spiraling out-of-control into self-destructive behaviors helps the survivor establish the awareness of their own sovereignty in relation to their body. From here, managing and creating a plan for safe external circumstances in the areas of living situation, finances, and travel establishes an environment of safety. This can be especially complex when the daily life and social circles of the survivor were complicit in the trauma suffered. However, treatment is most effective when caring people are able to support the survivor in their environment, while harmful relationships need to be given up.[53] Even if the patient no longer considers themselves to be in danger, there needs to be serious inquiry as to whether there is the potential for violence. Violence is not only limited to the survivor's community; it must also be considered whether survivors are a danger to themselves. Self-harming behavior takes on many forms, such as "suicidal thoughts and intentions, self-mutilation, eating disorders, substance abuse, impulsive risk-taking, and repetitive involvement in exploitative or dangerous relationships."[54] These kinds of self-harming behaviors can be understood as reenactments of the suffered trauma and as stemming from the trauma.[55] Moreover, establishing a plan of safety and enacting that plan can be a point of disagreement between a patient and therapist.[56]

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53. L. Ledray, *The Impact of Rape and the Relative Efficacy of Guide-to-Goals and Supportive Counseling as Treatment Modes for Rape Victims* (Ph.D. diss, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1984).

54. Herman, *Trauma*, 166.

55. Herman, *Trauma*, 166.

56. Herman, *Trauma*, 166.

However, allowing the patient the voice to determine and choose the best safety plan is a part of helping a patient establish control.[57]

Once the arduous and often dangerous task of establishing safety is completed for the survivor, the second stage is remembrance and mourning.[58] In this stage, Herman states that the individual must tell the story of their trauma. The reconstruction of this memory serves to change the memory so that it can be associated and integrated into the survivor's life-narrative.[59] In this stage, the traumatic horror must be revisited in depth. Denial and dissociation are no longer appropriate reactions to the trauma, but the painful path to recovery requires the active, intentional telling of the traumatic event. As Freud states, "The way is thus paved . . . for a reconciliation with the repressed material which is coming to expression in his symptoms, while at the same time a place is found for a certain tolerance for the state of being ill."[60] It is imperative that safety be preserved during the process of remembering and mourning, because it is from a safe position that traumatized individuals engage with their trauma.[61]

The process of reconstruction begins prior to the traumatic event and often includes details before the event and those that led to the event. The techniques that have been used therapeutically, such as the flooding technique or the testimony method,

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57. Herman, *Trauma*, 166.

58. Herman, *Trauma*, 175

59. See Richard Mollica, "The Trauma Story: The Psychiatric Care of Refugee Survivors of Violence and Torture," in *Post-Traumatic Therapy and Victims of Violence,* ed. Frank Ochberg (New York: Brunner/Mazel Publishing, 1988), 295–314.

60. Sigmund Freud, "Remembering, Repeating, and Working-Through (Further Recommendations on the Technique of Psycho-Analysis, II)," *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud 12*, trans. J. Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1958), 145–56.

61. Herman, *Trauma*, 176.

include the creating and correcting of a written script of the traumatic event. The patient then revisits those scripts with their therapist over the course of multiple sessions, revising and editing to come to a fully detailed account of their trauma. The number of sessions depends on the trauma and ability of the survivor, but it is usually a long process and not accomplished within a handful of sessions. The act of describing their trauma in the form of a story produces a change in the memory of the trauma, and it reduces the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.[62] For survivors of chronic abuse, instead of treating every single instance of abuse individually, especially since memories often blur together, the therapist will attempt to help the patient locate those memories that were most important.[63] In this way, one particular memory can carry the weight of a host of memories.

Mourning is the second step after remembering.[64] It is described as being one of the most difficult steps to recovery, and one that patients often try to avoid. Mourning often follows as a natural consequence of reconstructing traumatic memories, because trauma is the experience of the loss of self and the assumptive world.[65] Mourning is a necessary process, but the cultural conventions for mourning are often not comprehensive, especially since the trauma is repressed and unrecognized. The retelling of the trauma narrative brings these wounds to the surface, and there is frequently an urge to resist mourning. Mourning is often resisted by survivors, because by refusing to grieve,

62. Inger Agger and Soren Jensen, "Testimony as Ritual and Evidence in Psychotherapy for Political Refugees," *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 3 (1990), 115–30.

63. Herman, *Trauma*, 187.

64. Herman, *Trauma*, 188.

65. Joan Beder, "Loss of the Assumptive World—How We Deal with Death and Loss," *Omega* 50 (2004): 255–65.

the survivor does not allow the perpetrator to win.[66] There are also resistances to mourning that come in the form of fantasies. These fantasies are often retributive in nature, ranging from compensation to revenge.[67] In the modern process for recovery, however, the victim must accept that the likelihood of *lex talionis* is impossible. The more appropriate goal for anger in this process is a transformation from "helpless fury into righteous indignation."[68] These fantasies can often serve to continue resisting the loss that the trauma has brought on. Mourning is the only way to treat the loss with the seriousness it requires, and in mourning there also needs to be the recognition that there is no satisfactory retribution.[69] This step in its simplest formulation is the process by which a survivor comes to terms with their past.

The third step, according to Herman, is "reconnection." This is the step in the recovery process where the survivor begins to create a future that incorporates their trauma. The loss of self that has been suffered in the trauma has been mourned, and now the survivor must create a "new self."[70] This creation takes into account the relationships and beliefs that have been challenged, destroyed, and changed by the trauma and must now be transformed into something new that takes the entire traumatic experience, including the events before and after the experience, into account.[71] This stage shares much with the experience of refugees of political terror migrating into a new land and

66. Herman, *Trauma*, 188.

67. Herman, *Trauma*, 189.

68. Helen B. Lewis, *Shame and Guilt in Neurosis* (New York: International Universities Press, 1971), 1–28.

69. Herman, *Trauma*, 190.

70. Herman, *Trauma*, 196.

71. Herman, *Trauma*, 197.

culture.[72] This stage begins a new life that is altogether different from the one left behind. In this stage, the survivor takes any lessons that may be learned from their trauma and exploitation and incorporates them into their new life, facing the fear and helplessness that they once faced. This is an act of creation or of re-creation of the survivor's identity.[73] This stage is individualized in the ways it is carried out, as the previous stages have been, according to the needs and circumstances of the survivor. The steps toward reconnection are directly associated with the trauma inflicted and the steps toward recovery that have been taken.

The individual act of reconnection and recreation requires an optimistic imagination on the part of the survivor.[74] Optimism contrasts with the earlier stages where the trauma monopolized the survivor's imagination and fantasies. This imaginative aspect of this part in the process is an aid to eventually concretizing the imaginations of the survivor into real actions that may resolve in failure or success.[75] The sense of failure and success, however, are learned to be within the control of the individual, and the survivor no longer experiences the helplessness they felt before.

The third stage of recovery also involves establishing trustworthy relationships with others.[76] There is hopefully a better understanding of appropriate boundaries in relationships, and the individual feels more comfortable and in control of maintaining

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72. See Didier Fassin and Richard Rechtman, *The Empire of Trauma: An Inquiry Into The Condition of Victimhood,* trans. Rachel Gomme (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 231.

73. Herman, *Trauma*, 202.

74. Herman, *Trauma*, 202.

75. Herman, *Trauma*, 203.

76. Herman, *Trauma*, 205

those boundaries from the position of safety. In this stage, trauma becomes less of a barrier to intimacy, and romantic relationships become a possibility without the consistent and immediate intrusion of the traumatic memories and fears.[77] Survivors can also become interested in prevention and social action in this stage.[78] One of the ways in which social action is undertaken is by speaking publicly about the unspeakable for those who are still unable to voice their trauma, as well as to prevent future trauma.[79] One of the major accomplishments of this stage is the communication of trauma. The creation of language and narrative around the traumatic experience is the complete opposite of being traumatized.[80] The kind of communication that takes place in this step illustrates the significant work that has been done by the survivor to change the fragmented memories of trauma into a full and cohesive narrative. It represents the survivors getting ahold of their trauma and no longer living in the tyrannical grip of their horrific experiences.

77. Herman, *Trauma*, 206.

78. Herman, *Trauma*, 208.

79. Dori Laub, "An Event Without a Witness: Truth, Testimony and Survival," in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History,* ed. Shoshana Feldman and Dori Laub (New York: Routledge, 1992) 75–92.

80. Van der Kolk, *Body*, 237.