

JEAN-LOUIS SKA

The Exegesis
of the Pentateuch

*Forschungen
zum Alten Testament*

66

Mohr Siebeck

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Bernd Janowski (Tübingen) · Mark S. Smith (New York)

Hermann Spieckermann (Göttingen)

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Jean-Louis Ska

The Exegesis of the Pentateuch

Exegetical Studies and Basic Questions

Mohr Siebeck

Jean-Louis Ska: born 1946; studies at the Facultés Notre-Dame de la Paix (Namur, Belgium), Sankt Georgen (Frankfurt, Germany), and the Pontifical Biblical Institute (Rome); 1984 doctorate in Sacred Scriptures; Professor of Old Testament Exegesis (Pentateuch) at the Pontifical Biblical Institute (Rome).

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Foreword

Reading some of one's essays over again is like rediscovering old pictures after a few years. Things have changed of course, but faces, events, objects, and landscapes are still recognizable. Some events have had their aftermath. Some people have had other adventures. Some items or landscapes have been modified, but the picture did fix for ever one phase of their long history.

I had this experience when preparing an English version of the articles gathered in this volume. They belong to a certain phase in the discussions around the formation of the Pentateuch that started in the seventies of the last century. They were meant as contributions to the debate from a particular angle, that of the texts. To plagiarize an old saying, "Theories go, texts remain." If there is any value in these studies, it is to be found mainly in the observations on the text.

All in all, there are two main categories of articles. In the first and the longest part of the volume, I deal with texts or series of texts (chap. 1–11). In the second series (chap. 12–15), the focus is on some main aspects of the Pentateuch: the nature of the law codes, the problem of there being one or many narrators' voices in biblical narratives, and the question of the redactor and the legitimacy of resorting to redactors to solve exegetical difficulties. Eventually, I added a last article of a more general nature. It offers a reflexion on the purpose of biblical exegesis, taking some examples from the past and the present.

The first series of articles deals with texts from the books of Genesis and Exodus. The first one, which was often quoted and discussed afterwards, re-examines the traditional exegesis of the flood story (Gen 6–9). Since the days of Wellhausen – and even before, from the time of Astruc, Eichhorn and Ilgen, – exegetes considered that the text combined two main sources, a Yahwist and Priestly one. The Yahwist was afterwards considered as the older of the two, under the influence of Reuss, Graf, Kuenen and Wellhausen. After a careful study of the text and a discussion with some recent and less recent studies on the matter, I come to the conclusion that the so-called Yahwist source in the flood story is not a complete source, but a series of redactional additions to the Priestly Writer. This means, firstly, that the oldest version of the flood story we find in the Bible is the Priestly one. After all, everyone knows that the flood story is of Mesopotamian origin and it must come as no surprise if the first biblical version of it is exilic or post-exilic. The second important conclusion of this study is that some important texts in the Pentateuch are later than the

Priestly Writer. Eventually, but this is not completely new, the study questions the existence of a Yahwist, at least in this part of the book of Genesis. In spite of the many works published afterwards and the criticism my article underwent, the thesis seems to me still solid enough and my observations on the text remain worth further examination¹.

The second article is of a broader scope. It embraces the whole of the Abraham cycle. The starting point is a synchronic analysis of some main features of the texts as it stands, namely time and space. The most important place in the Abraham cycle is Hebron and the most important period of his life is that between his arrival in the land of Canaan and the birth of his son Isaac, this means the period between his 75th and his 100th year. From a diachronic point of view, I try to pinpoint the period in which the Abraham cycle was composed and became the first part of the patriarchal narratives. I propose to see in it the hand of the returnees from the exile who used several traditions coming from the land and reformulated them for their own purpose. Abraham becomes the ancestor not only of those who remained in the land (Ezek 33:24), but first of all of those who came back from Mesopotamia as Abraham comes from Ur of the Chaldeans.²

Gen 12:1–4 (chap. 3) is a famous text that was once labelled as the “Kerygma of the Yahwist” (H. H. Wolff). A close examination of the vocabulary and the phraseology of Yhwh’s first address to Abraham leads to conclusions that surprised and even upset some of my colleagues. My thesis is that the text is very late, even post-deuteronomic and post-priestly. It re-interprets the Priestly text describing the migration of Abraham from Harran to Canaan and makes it

¹ See especially M. WITTE, *Die biblische Urgeschichte. Redaktions- und theologiegeschichtliche Beobachtungen zu Genesis 1,1–11,26* (BZAW 265; Berlin – New York: W. de Gruyter, 1998), who tries to defend the presence of a complete Yahwistic source in Genesis 1–11. See also L. SCHRADER, “Kommentierende Redaktion im Noah-Sintflut-Komplex der Genesis,” *ZAW* 110 (1998) 489–502; E. BOSSHARD-NEPUSTIL, *Vor uns die Sintflut. Studien zu Text, Kontexten und Rezeption der Fluterzählung Genesis 6–9* (BWANT 165; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2005); J.Ch. GERTZ, “Beobachtungen zum literarischen Charakter und zum geistesgeschichtlichen Ort der nichtpriesterschriftlichen Sintfluterzählung,” *Auf dem Weg zur Endgestalt von Genesis bis II Regum*. Festschrift Hans-Christoph Schmitt (Hrsg. M. BECK – U. SCHORN) (BZAW 370; Berlin – New York: de Gruyter, 2006) 41–57; A. SCHÜLE, *Der Prolog der hebräischen Bibel. Der literar- und theologiegeschichtliche Diskurs der Urgeschichte (Genesis 1–11)* (AThANT 86; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2006) 247–301; M. ARNETH, *Durch Adams Fall ist ganz verderbt ... Studien zur Entstehung der alttestamentlichen Urgeschichte* (FRLANT 217; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007).

² For other recent studies on this topic, see Th. RÖMER, “Recherches actuelles sur le cycle d’Abraham”, *Studies in the Book of Genesis. Literature, Redaction and History* (ed. A. WÉNIN) (BETL 155; Leuven: Peeters, 2001) 179–211; M. KÖCKERT, “Die Geschichte der Abrahamüberlieferung”, *Congress Volume. Leiden 2004* (ed. André LEMAIRE) (VTS 109; Leiden: Brill, 2006) 103–128.

an act of faith and obedience to Yhwh, the God of Israel. The birth of Israel as “nation” coincides with this journey into the unknown.³

Gen 15 (chap. 4) is one of the most discussed and most complicated texts of the Book of Genesis. In my (unpublished) study, I do not deal with all the questions raised by this famous text. I concentrate on the problem of style or composition. Some exegetes assert that this text contains traces of deuteronomic or deuteronomistic phraseology or theology. There may be similarities between Gen 15, or some parts of it, and deuteronomic or deuteronomistic literature. But the style is different. The thesis I elaborate is that the text was written in some popular circles, the so-called “people of the land” who remained in Judah during the exile. After the exile, they collected some of their own traditions and combined them with a few ideas introduced by the returnees from the exile, for instance, the fact that Abraham was called by God from Ur of the Chaldeans (Gen 15:7). More important, they make Abraham the pioneer and the founder of Israel’s religion and Israel’s main institutions. He is a prophet before the prophets, the first believer in Yhwh’s promises, the founder of Israel’s cult, he experiences an exodus before the Exodus and something similar to the Sinai theophany before the Sinai theophany, and Yhwh concludes a covenant with him long before another covenant is concluded with Israel on the same mount Sinai. Abraham precedes Moses and this is the main challenge of this text. Gen 15 was introduced into the Pentateuch for several reasons. First the returnees and the people of the land came to a kind of compromise because they could not live separately in the small province of Yehud, and this for economical, political, and religious reasons. Second, the text obviously reflects the mentality of the people of the land, but it also picks up one of the features introduced by the returnees, namely the call of Abraham from Ur of the Chaldeans. The people of the land had to use this feature because they wanted to introduce an exodus before the Exodus. Abraham’s journey was the most appropriate motif for this purpose. Moreover, the later addition of Gen 15:13–16 – I consider it as an addition – is the price that had to be paid to make the text acceptable to the authorities in Jerusalem. Abraham came first, yes, but the promise was fulfilled only afterwards, with the Exodus.

Now, as we know, and this is a result of recent research, Genesis and Exodus, Abraham and Moses, represent different traditions and different claims by different groups (A. de Pury, T. Römer and K. Schmid). I see in the exodus tradition, with its insistence on law and covenant, cult and temple, the mental-

³ On this text, see, for instance, A. FLURY-SCHÖLCH, *Abrahams Segen und die Völker. Synchroner und diachroner Untersuchungen zu Gen 12,1–3 unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der intertextuellen Beziehungen zu Gen 18; 22; 26; 28; Sir 44; Jer 4 und Ps 72* (FzB 115; Würzburg: Echter, 2007); M. LEUENBERGER, *Segen und Segenstheologien im alten Israel. Untersuchungen zu ihren religions- und theologiegeschichtlichen Konstellationen und Transformationen* (ATHANT 90; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2008) 181–218.

ity of the returnees. This group was perhaps less united than is often thought, but let us leave that question aside for the time being. The people of the land, on the other hand, who never left the province of Judah, had in Abraham and the traditions attached to him a basis for their claims against the returnees. The presence of Gen 15 in the Book of Genesis and in the Pentateuch is the result of long discussions, tensions, negotiations, concessions, agreements, and compromises between the different groups obliged to live together in the small province of Yehud.⁴

We come to a completely different exegetical literary genre with the study on Gn 18:1–15 (chap. 5).⁵ I decided to add this short article for two main reasons. First, I wanted to show that one can play biblical music with different instruments. There is no monopoly in exegesis, and there is no monotony either. Second, it represents one of my first attempts to apply more literary methods to biblical narratives without denying the main results or the legitimacy of the historical-critical method. I was even tempted to entitle my article, plagiarising James Muilenburg, “Source Criticism and Beyond”.⁶ But that would have been too much. In my essay I simply pinpoint some main narrative strategies used in Gen 18:1–15, namely shifts in points of view, reading positions, irony, and especially the use of some props in the scenery. Afterwards I studied some more strategies of this kind and even published a small handbook on the topic.⁷

We shift again to another method in the short study entirely dedicated to a single word in Gen 18:6, the word *sōlet*, which means “fine flour” (chap. 6). My purpose is to show that this word was inserted by a very late redactor who intended to make Abraham an early very conscientious observer of the law even in some very tiny details such as the choice of flour to prepare cakes for three chance guests. The reader, however, knows from the start that Yhwh himself is present among these guests, and this is what matters for the late redactor responsible for the insertion of the word *sōlet* in 18:6.⁸

Gen 22 is one of the most famous episodes in the whole of the Book of Genesis. Two articles deal with this text from two different viewpoints. The

⁴ For other and recent opinions on this text, see among others, C. LEVIN, “Jahwe und Abraham im Dialog: Genesis 15,” *Gott und Mensch im Dialog*. Festschrift Otto Kaiser zum 80. Geburtstag (Hrsg. M. WITTE) (BZAW 345/1; Berlin – New York: de Gruyter, 2004) 237–257; L. SCHMIDT, “Genesis XV,” *VT* 56 (2006) 251–267.

⁵ The text was recently studied from another viewpoint by, among others, D. JERICKE, *Abraham in Mamre. Historische und exegetische Studien zur Region von Hebron und zu Genesis 11,27–19,38* (Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 17; Leiden: Brill, 2003).

⁶ See J. MUILENBURG, “Form Criticism and Beyond,” *JBL* 88 (1969) 1–18.

⁷ J.-L. SKA, “*Our Fathers Have Told Us*”: *Introduction to the Analysis of Hebrew Narratives* (SubBib 13; Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1990, 2000).

⁸ The method chosen is that of M. FISHBANE, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).

first analyses a particular strategy used in the narrative, i. e. the interplay of different levels of knowledge (chap. 7).⁹ In a few words, the reader is told more than Abraham – who does not know that God is testing him – and Abraham knows more than Isaac who does not know that his father is going to offer him in sacrifice. Other elements, still along the same lines, are to be observed. For instance, the reader never knows exactly what the mental processes in Abraham’s mind are. We can only observe what he does and infer from these actions what decisions he takes each time. His interior drama is never disclosed to the reader. The dramatic tension in the narrative comes to its high point when the angel of Yhwh declares “Now I know,” which means that the *anagnorisis*, the passage from ignorance to knowledge, is experienced by God himself. This paradox – that gave much trouble to rabbis and Fathers of the Church alike – is the way Gen 22 exposes in narrative terms the mystery of human freedom in relation to God.

The second article picks up the very paradox expressed in Gen 22:13 (“Now I know ...”) and explores the different ways this verse was interpreted throughout the centuries by the different schools of exegesis and in different denominations (chap. 8). There are philological, theological, and literary proposals. The main shift in the interpretation of the text takes places at the beginning of the Renaissance. Readers and interpreters adopt a more anthropological stance, and they are more attentive to Abraham’s drama and less inclined to save God’s omniscience.¹⁰

The exegetical and methodological landscape changes once again when passing from the Book of Genesis to the Book of Exodus. Exod 19:3–8 is surely one of the most discussed passages in the whole Book and especially in the Sinai section (chap. 9). A close examination of style, vocabulary and phraseology leads me to the conclusion that this text is a very late composition combining elements stemming from priestly and deuteronomistic theological schools. The pericope, placed right at the beginning of the Sinai section, orientates the reading of the whole following section. It invites the reader to

⁹ Among recent studies on Gen 22, let me mention at least A. MICHEL, *Gott und Gewalt gegen Kinder im Alten Testament* (FAT 37; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003) 246–313; K. SCHMID, “Die Rückgabe der Verheißungsgabe. Der ‘heilgeschichtliche’ Sinn von Gen 22 im Horizont innerbiblischen Exegese,” *Gott und Mensch im Dialog*. Festschrift Otto Kaiser zum 80. Geburtstag (Hrsg. M. WITTE) (BZAW 345/1; Berlin – New York: de Gruyter, 2004) 271–300; U. SCHORN, “Genesis 22 – Revisited,” *Auf dem Weg zur Endgestalt von Genesis bis II Regum*. Festschrift Hans-Christoph Schmitt (Hrsg. M. BECK – U. SCHORN) (BZAW 370; Berlin – New York: de Gruyter, 2006) 89–109; O. BOEHM, *The Binding of Isaac: A Religious Model of Disobedience* (Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 468; New York – London: T&T Clark, 2007).

¹⁰ Along the same lines, see also J.A. STEIGER – U. HEINEN, *Isaaks Opferung (Gen 22) in den Konfessionen und Medien der frühen Neuzeit* (Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte 101; Berlin – New York: de Gruyter, 2006).

see in the proclamation of the law and in the covenant in Exod 24:3–8 the constitution of the post-exilic Israel as nation among the nations. Israel is a “priestly kingdom” which means, *ad extra*, that Israel is *the* nation chosen to be at the service of the God of the universe, just as priests are at the service of the divinity in a temple. *Ad intra*, it means that Israel is ruled, not by a king, but mainly by the priesthood.¹¹

Exod 24:9–11 is another famous text (chap. 10). The meal and the vision on the mountain have been explained in many ways. I personally prefer to identify in these two elements symbols of legitimating two main institutions of the post-exilic Israel, i. e. the priesthood and the elders. The main representatives of Israel can “see” God and “eat and drink” in his presence exactly as courtiers and officials are admitted into a king’s presence and at his table. The thesis is supported by several biblical parallels. The date of the text is also disputed, but the closest parallels in the Book of Ezekiel indicate, according to me, a post-exilic date.¹²

With the “Praise of the Fathers” in Sir 44–50, we leave the Pentateuch and even the Hebrew Bible to enter the realm of the deuterocanonical or apocryphal books of the Old Testament (chap. 11). My contention is that this section of the book really reflects the first attempts by the intellectual elite in Jerusalem to reflect on the history of their nation and to introduce a principle of periodization. The first and more important division is that between the figures belonging to what is now called the Pentateuch and those we find in the so-called prophetic books (Josh – 2Kgs; Isa, Jer, Ezek, and the twelve minor prophets). It is surely too early to speak of the formation of a biblical canon, but we are on the way leading to it. The Writings, for their part, will receive their status as sacred and authoritative writings only later. My intention, in publishing this article, is to inquire about a subsequent stage of Israel’s reflection on its own traditions and history. Events lose their importance and leave more room for personages and key figures. We leave the realm of typical Ancient Near East ways of thinking

¹¹ For recent works and different perspectives on Exod 19:3–8, see among others L. SCHMIDT, “Israel und das Gesetz. Ex 19,3b–8 und 24,3–8 als literarischer und theologischer Rahmen für das Bundesbuch,” *ZAW* 113 (2001) 167–185; R. ACHENBACH, “The Story of the Revelation at the Mountain of God and the Redactional Editions of the Hexateuch and the Pentateuch,” *A Critical Study of the Pentateuch: An Encounter Between Europe and Africa* (eds. E. OTTO – J. LE ROUX) (Altes Testament und Moderne 20; Münster: Lit Verlag, 2005) 126–151; A. GRAUPNER, “‘Ihr sollt mir ein Königreich von Priestern und ein heiliges Volk sein’. Erwägungen zur Funktion von Ex 19,3b–8 innerhalb der Sinaiperikope,” *Moses in Biblical and Extra-Biblical Traditions* (Hrsg. A. GRAUPNER – M. WOLTER) (BZAW 372; Berlin–New York: de Gruyter, 2007) 33–49.

¹² For more information, see the recent commentaries on the Book of Exodus, C. DOHMEN, *Exodus 19–40* (HTKAT; Freiburg i. Breisgau: Herder, 2004); W. H. C. PROPP, *Exodus 19–40: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 2; New York: Doubleday, 2006).

to adjust to a more Greek sensitivity where the human person plays a more prominent role.¹³

With the article on the nature and purpose of the biblical collections of laws we enter a second and much shorter part of the volume. It contains articles on the main literary genres of the Pentateuch, the laws and the narratives, and on two main problems of modern exegesis, the legitimacy of redactional criticism and of source criticism.

The first article offers a short overview of the main aspects of the biblical laws, especially the nature and function of the biblical codes which are, most probably, literary works rather than codes of prescriptive and positive laws similar to most of the codes we know in continental Europe (chap. 12). Other aspects are analysed, such as for example the fact that all laws are promulgated in the desert, before the entrance into the promised land. This means that biblical laws are more personal than territorial. On this point biblical law is more similar to old German common law than to ancient Greek and Roman law. Biblical laws are linked neither to territory nor to monarchy, the two pillars of a nation in antiquity. I also try to show the impact biblical laws had on modern democracy. I mean to say that certain basic ideas of modern western jurisprudence have biblical roots. I am thinking especially of the value of consensus in authorizing a collection of laws, of equality before the law, and the evolution of law in the course of history. I also notice that the authority of Moses, the legislator of Israel, is not founded upon any kind of power, either political or military, but upon his "competence." The exhortative style of many biblical laws, which are closer to wisdom teaching than to either ancient or modern codes of law, reminds us that in public life inner conviction should always precede legal constrictions and sanctions. Collective responsibility is another aspect of biblical law that deserves a thorough explanation because it is often misunderstood. Translated into more modern terms, it means that every citizen is actively responsible for the good and the safety of the whole society. One of the corollaries of this principle is that, for biblical law, the rights of the victim are more important than the problems of determining with certainty who is the real culprit. In conclusion, we can affirm that with Roman Law and ancient Germanic Common Law, the Bible is one of the main sources of modern western law.¹⁴

¹³ For some more recent information on this text, see the commentary by G. SAUER, *Jesus Sirach/Ben Sira* (ATD Apocryphen 1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000); A. GOSHEN-GOTTSTEIN, "Ben Sira's Praise of the Fathers: A Canon-conscious Reading," *Ben Sira's God: Proceedings of the International Ben Sira Conference. Durham – Ushaw College 2001* (R. EGGER-WENZEL) (BZAW 321; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002) 235–267.

¹⁴ Among the many recent publications in the field, let me mention at least R. WESTBROOK (ed.), *A History of Ancient Near Eastern Law I–II* (Handbook of Oriental Studies. I: The Near and Middle East 78.1–2; Leiden: Brill, 2003). For a more complete bibliography, see J. WELCH, *Biblical Law Cumulative Bibliography on CD-ROM* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisen-

The second literary genre of the Pentateuch, narrative, is the object of an article that proposes an answer to a basic question in the dialogue between synchronic and diachronic methods (chap. 13). The question is whether there is only one voice, i. e. one narrator, or there are many voices in biblical narratives. The one voice of the one narrator often invoked by exegetes who adopt synchronic methods is a way of demonstrating the basic unity of biblical literature. It could be a modern substitute for the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, for instance. This holds true especially for texts which are commonly considered as composite, such as the flood story (Gen 6–9) or the so-called crossing of the sea (Exod 14). Is there one narrator or is there more than one narrator in these intricate narratives? My answer is that in biblical narratives the voices are many, especially in composite texts, and the image we have to use is that of a concert of voices in a choir, not that of a soloist.¹⁵

The narrator is a basic concept of literary and synchronic exegesis. Redactor is a basic concept of diachronic exegesis and it was therefore appropriate to include an article on this topic in this volume (chap. 14). Basically I defend the concept of redactor against recent attacks, especially coming from my friend John Van Seters.¹⁶ For him, the notion of “redactor” is anachronistic because it comes from the Renaissance and is limited to the work of those people who edited ancient manuscripts, never to the authors of the works themselves. My answer is based on two main observations. First of all, the problematic notion is not that of redactor, but of author. As William M. Schniedewind aptly notes, “The question about who wrote the Bible is also misguided because it emphasizes the individuality of the author. The emphasis on individual expression is not a universal value, even if it is a god of modern American culture. In some cultures, the group takes precedence over the individual. In folk literature, for instance, the literature belongs to the group that shares the tradition. The meaning of the text is not tied to the singer of tales. [...] Early Israel and its literature certainly reflect this emphasis on the group rather than the individual.”¹⁷ The anonymity of the authors of the Pentateuch is a main characteristic of biblical literature and we should not forget that John Van Seters’ two main authors,

brauns – Provo, UT: BYU Press, 2005); E. OTTO, “Das Recht der Hebräischen Bibel im Kontext der antiken Rechtsgeschichte. Literaturbericht 1994–2004,” *ThRu* 71 (2006) 389–421.

¹⁵ On the narrator and Narratology, see the recent works by K. SEYBOLD, *Poetik der erzählenden Literatur im Alten Testament* (Poetologische Studien zum Alten Testament 2; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2007); M. S. SMITH, “Biblical Narratives between Ugaritic and Akkadian Literature. Part I: Ugarit and the Hebrew Bible: Some Considerations,” *RB* 114 (2007) 5–29; ID., “Biblical Narratives between Ugaritic and Akkadian Literature. Part II: Mesopotamian Impact on Biblical Narrative,” *RB* 114 (2007) 189–207.

¹⁶ See his recent study, published after my article on the topic, J. VAN SETERS, *The Edited Bible: The Curious History of the “Editor” in Biblical Criticism* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006).

¹⁷ W. M. SCHNIEDEWIND, *How the Bible Became a Book: The Textualization of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge, UK: University Press, 2004) 6.

namely the Yahwist and the Deuteronomist, are simply inventions of modern exegesis. They did not sign their works and did not leave traces of their authorship. The first biblical work that bears a signature is the apocryphal or deuterocanonical book of Ben Sirach (Sir 51:30).

My second line of argument goes along with a recent trend in textual criticism. The discoveries of Qumran led to a re-evaluation of ancient versions such as the Septuagint and the Samaritan Pentateuch. The differences between the different textual traditions show, in my opinion, that texts were never considered as untouchable. The many modifications introduced into one or the other tradition can easily be detected by a careful comparison of the different manuscripts at our disposal. For instance, are the differences between the Book of Jeremiah in the Septuagint and the Masoretic Text, which is sixteen percent longer and adopts a different order of chapters, to be explained by the work of an “author” or of a “redactor”? John Van Seters is probably too much attached to the *hebraica veritas* and has not yet realized that the Masoretic Text has no monopoly in biblical exegesis. He replied to my article, pinpointing some weaknesses in my argumentation, especially in my use of Homer.¹⁸ But, in my opinion, he did not give any satisfactory explanation of the notion of authorship in antiquity. Who is the “author” of the Gilgamesh Epic? And of the Code of Hammurapi? And, in my view, John Van Seters did not explain the reason why texts such as the Book of Jeremiah could have been so drastically altered by other persons than his supposed author. What should we call them? Whether the Septuagint or the Masoretic text is more ancient does not impinge on the problem as such. Another clear example is the difference between the Masoretic Text and the Septuagint of Exod 35–40. Are the changes to be attributed to authors, redactors, or translators? Anyway, the question is crucial and the adding to the number of redactional layers to solve critical problems in the exegesis of biblical texts is no solution either. Here I agree with my friend John Van Seters’ *caveat*. To adapt Ockham’s principle, let me say, *Redactiones non sunt multiplicandae praeter necessitatem*.

The starting point of chapter 15 was a comparison between the exegesis of Flavius Josephus and that of Spinoza.¹⁹ The first, in his apology for Jewish culture (*Contra Apionem*), defended the antiquity and the unity of the Jewish Scriptures in comparison with Greek literature, especially Greek historiography. He wanted to show the superiority and reliability of Jewish Scriptures in a world that had much, if not exclusive, admiration for Greek culture and tended to consider everything else as barbarian. From the time of Baruch Spinoza, on the contrary, scholars started to detect tensions and contradictions in bibli-

¹⁸ J. VAN SETERS, “Author or Redactor?”, *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 7, Article 9 (2007) 1–23, accessible on the internet: <http://www.jhsonline.org> and <http://purl.org/jhs>.

¹⁹ This chapter contains the unpublished text of a conference given at the *Facoltà Valdese di Teologia* (Rome) that was celebrating its 150th anniversary in 2005.

cal literature. Progressively they also showed that the texts were written long after the events they are supposed to describe. My contention is that we have good reasons today to be disciples of Spinoza rather than of Josephus. This is not only a result of recent progress in exegetical research or a simple fad widespread among scholars. Recent discoveries, especially the Judaean Desert manuscripts, the new interest in the Septuagint and the Samaritan Pentateuch, the comparison with Ancient Near East texts, and the careful interpretation of archaeological finds; all these elements together lead one to conclude that “There are not only many voices in our Masoretic choir, there are several biblical choirs.” The variety of texts treated and the variety of methods used in this volume is only one way of emphasizing that the word Bible is originally a plural, τὰ βιβλία – “the books”.²⁰

The articles were carefully translated by Fr. Leo Arnold and I take this opportunity to express my deep gratitude to him.

I corrected only a few obvious misprints or mistakes, and added only a very few references in the footnotes. I preferred to publish the articles in their original form because they contributed to the exegetical debate in that form. After their appearance I published an Introduction to the Pentateuch where I expound my positions at length.²¹

I also thank Prof. Dr. Hans Spiekermann, Prof. Dr. Bernd Janowski and Prof. Dr. Mark Smith for kindly inviting me to publish a selection of articles in the series *Forschung zum Alten Testament* and Dr. Henning Ziebritzki for his encouragement, his patience, and his help in difficult moments.

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Jean-Louis Ska

²⁰ The following publications in the field could be of some interest: S. NADLER, *Spinoza's Heresy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); R. POPKIN, *Spinoza* (Oxford: One World, 2004); Z. RODGERS, *Making History: Josephus and Historical Method* (Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 110; Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2007).

²¹ J.-L. SKA, *Introduction to Reading the Pentateuch* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006). This is the English version of a work published first in Italian in 1998, but revised and corrected for the several reprints in Italian and for the translations into various languages.

The Story of the Flood: a Priestly Writer and Some Later Editorial Fragments

In a book that was to tip the balance definitely in favour of the documentary hypothesis, to the detriment of the one about fragments or supplements, Hermann Hupfeld distinguished two independent and different sources in the story of the Flood (Gen 6–9)¹. He came to the following conclusions: the *Grundschrift*, or the “Elohist” (basic story, our “P”) provides the fullest story; to it he assigns 6:9–22; 7:6, 11, 13–24 (except for 16b, 23); 8:1–19 (except for 6a, 7); 9:1–17. The “yhwh-ist” is more recent and also shorter; it comprises the following verses: 6:5–8; 7:1–5 (7, 8) 10, 12, 16b, 17, 23; 8:(1b), 2b, 3a, 4aab, 6–12, 20–22². Schrader³ and Budde⁴ later took up and refined the work but in general this way of dividing up the verses has remained unchanged until this day⁵. The few changes affect chapters seven and eight. Vv. 2b, 3a, 6–12 of this chapter 8 are normally ascribed to the Yahwist⁶. On the other hand, the exegetes also managed to discover a Yahwist version parallel to the Priestly Writer in two scenes, the description of the flood (7:17b) and the discovery that the earth was dry (8:13b). Lastly, they had recourse to the hypothesis of a certain number of redactional interventions inside the J text which, according to them, harmo-

¹ H. HUPFELD, *Die Quellen der Genesis und die Art ihrer Zusammensetzung von neuem untersucht* (Berlin 1853) 6–16; 132–139. For previous attempts of the same kind, see J. ASTRUC, *Conjectures sur les mémoires originaux dont il paraît que Moïse s’est servi pour composer le Livre de la Genèse, avec des Remarques qui appuient ou éclaircissent ces Conjectures* (Bruxelles 1753) who finds three sources in Gn 6–9; see J. ASTRUC, *Conjectures sur la Genèse. Introduction et notes de Pierre Gibert* (Paris 1999) 169–181; J.-G. EICHHORN, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament I–III* (Leipzig 1780–1783); K.-D. ILGEN, *Die Urkunden des ersten Buches von Moses in ihrer Urgestalt ...* (Halle 1798) 382–385, summary on pp. 427 (mainly two sources, the two Elohist).

² HUPFELD, *Quellen*, 11–12 and 136.

³ E. SCHRADER, *Studien zur Kritik der biblischen Urgeschichte Gen. Cap. I–XI*. (Zürich 1863) 136–154.

⁴ K. BUDDE, *Die biblische Urgeschichte (Gen. 1–12,5)* (Gießen 1883) 248–289.

⁵ See, for example, A. DILLMANN, *Die Genesis* (KEHAT; Leipzig ⁵1886) 125–128; H. HOLZINGER, *Genesis* (KHCAT 1; Freiburg – Leipzig – Tübingen 1898) 68–69; H. GUNKEL, *Genesis* (GHAT 1,1; Göttingen ³1910) 59 and 137; S. R. DRIVER, *The Book of Genesis* (Westminster Commentaries; London ⁹1913) 85–86; J. SKINNER, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis* (ICC; Edinburgh ²1930) 148. For more recent commentaries, see below.

⁶ 8:2b, 3a: a parallel story about the descent of the waters; 6–12: the scene about sending the birds. On the difficulties posed by the sending out of the raven (8:7), see C. WESTERMANN, *Genesis 1. Genesis 1–11* (BK 1,1; Neukirchen-Vluyn ³1983) 596–597.

nized this latter text with the Priestly Writer, especially in chapter 7: 7:3a, 7, 8, 17a, 23⁷. The commentary by Westermann, to cite just one example, takes up the allocation of the verses as proposed by Hupfeld, Schrader and Budde apart from a few minor changes; he ascribes 6:9–22; 7:11, 13–16a, 17a, 18–21; 8:1–2a, 3b–5, 13a, 14–19; 9:1–17, 18–19 to P. 6:5–8; 7:1–5, 7, 10, 12, 16b, 17b, 22, 23a, 23c; 8:2b, 3a, 6–12, 13b, 20–22 to J⁸.

The situation is particularly stable, which is somewhat rare in this field. The consensus is almost total and discussions bear only on some minor points. Verse 7:17a causes a difficulty but it is generally ascribed to P. Further discussion centres on 9:4–6 which is sometimes considered as a later addition in the Priestly style⁹. Let us mention the particular problems in 7:22 and 8:7 again¹⁰.

The only real difficulty comes from the chronology of the sources and their mutual relationships. For Hupfeld, the “Elohistic” story (E) or *Grundschrift* was earlier than the Yahwistic story (J). Things changed with Reuß, Graf, Kuenen and Wellhausen and the Priestly Writer became a post-exilic document, later than J¹¹. Thus, without further ado, the “J” story of the flood became earlier than the Priestly version of the same episode and no one, or hardly anyone, asked about the legitimacy of this operation in this precise case, as in so many others as well.

On the other hand, the relationship between J and P has been the subject of various studies that have not always produced concordant results. McEvenue thinks that P depends on J¹². The idea had already been mooted by Volz and

⁷ See especially M. NOTH, *Überlieferungsgeschichte des Pentateuch* (Stuttgart 1948) 17 and 29.

⁸ WESTERMANN, *Genesis 1*, 532–533. The other recent commentaries do not differ much on this point; see G. J. WENHAM, *Genesis 1–15* (WBC 1; Waco, Texas 1987) 167 (however, this author offers an original theory about this; see below); L. RUPPERT, *Genesis. Ein kritischer und theologischer Kommentar*. 1. Teilband: *Gen 1, 1–11, 26* (FzB 70; Würzburg 1992) 295–296. See also S. E. MCEVENUE, *The Narrative Style of the Priestly Writer* (AnBib 50; Rome 1971); E. ZENGER, *Gottes Bogen in den Wolken. Untersuchung zu Komposition und Theologie der priesterschriftlichen Urgeschichte* (SBS 112; Stuttgart 1983) 103–107, esp. 105.

⁹ This suggestion was made by HOLZINGER, *Genesis*, 74; he was followed by R. SMEND, *Die Erzählung des Hexateuch auf ihre Quellen untersucht* (Berlin 1912) 9; MCEVENUE, *Narrative Art*, 68–71; N. LOHFINK, “Die Schichten des Pentateuch und der Krieg,” *Studien zum Pentateuch* (SBAAT 4; Stuttgart 1988) 88, n. 78. WESTERMANN, *Genesis 1*, 621, rejects the idea.

¹⁰ On 7:22 see SCHRADER, *Studien*, 141; BUDDE, *Urgeschichte*, 265; GUNKEL, *Genesis*, 63. On 8:7 see n. 6.

¹¹ For more details see A. DE PURY – T. RÖMER, “Le Pentateuque en question. Position du problème et brève histoire de la recherche,” *Le Pentateuque en question* (éd. A. DE PURY) (Le Monde de la Bible; Genève ²1991) 22–29.

¹² MCEVENUE, *Narrative Style*, 24–27.

Rudolph¹³. Eerdmans had come out with the opposite opinion¹⁴. More recently, two exegetes, Wenham and Blenkinsopp, have again proposed a hypothesis similar to that of the Dutch exegete (without knowing it): the J texts would form a series of redactional additions later than P¹⁵. In company with Eerdmans, Wenham and Blenkinsopp research finds Hupfeld again, but with an important nuance: J is not a “source” since it does not contain a complete story of the flood, but reduces to a redactional layer.

Our purpose will be to clarify some points in this debate. First of all we would like to show that the “J” story cannot constitute an independent source. Then the analysis of some key texts will prove that these “fragments,” as we shall call them, do not belong to the J source and that they are, on the contrary, late and even later than the P text. In other words, there is only one complete story of the flood, the one written by the Priestly Writer, and the texts traditionally ascribed to J are additions coming from a post-exilic redaction. However, before being able to discuss the J text we have to review the way some verses are ascribed, especially 7:7–9; 7:17b; 8:3, 13. In our opinion they belong to P and not to J. Consequently, they will not enter into the debate.

1. Some false doublets in the story of the flood

1.1. Gen 7:7–9 and the two entries into the ark

On 7:7–9 one must admit that the classical hypothesis has to perform a veritable tour de force to maintain that we have here a J text¹⁶. Here we have a classic doublet since there are two entries into the ark (7:7–9 and 13–16a). The vocabulary of vv. 13–16a forces one to ascribe them to P¹⁷. And the reference to pure and impure animals in v. 8 confirms that these verses really belong to J. However, the rest of the text plays more than one outrageous trick on the exegetes who are forced to ascribe a large part to the “editor” and “harmonizer”

¹³ P. VOLZ – W. RUDOLPH, *Der Elohist als Erzähler. Ein Irrweg der Pentateuchforschung? An der Genesis erklärt* (BZAW 63; Gießen 1933) 140–142 (“Die Flutgeschichte”).

¹⁴ B. D. EERDMANS, *Alttestamentliche Studien. I: Die Komposition der Genesis* (Gießen 1908) 81–82.

¹⁵ WENHAM, *Genesis 1*, 167–169; J. BLENKINSOPP, *The Pentateuch: An Introduction to the First Five Books of the Bible* (The Anchor Bible Reference Library; New York 1992) 77–78. See also E. BLUM, *Studien zur Komposition des Pentateuch* (BZAW 189; Berlin – New York 1990) 282 n. 206.

¹⁶ See, for example, the discussion in HOLZINGER, *Genesis*, 80. Earlier on, Wellhausen had thought that 7:6–9 came from a post-priestly editor (*Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels* [Berlin 1878] 383–384). See also, more recently, BLUM *Studien*, 280–285.

¹⁷ Among other items: *זכר ונקבה, כל-בשר, רמש, מן* (“species”), *בעצם היום הזה*.

of the final text¹⁸. He it is who would have described Noah's family like P and not like J (7:7a; cf. 6:18 [P] and 7:1 [ביהדן, J]); he would also have introduced properly Priestly formulas and words which were unknown to J such as *רמש על האדמה*¹⁹; *ונקבה*²⁰; the formula of command in 7:9b and, irony of ironies, he would even have changed the name of יהוה into אלהים in the same verse. That means a lot of interference in a very short space.

In our opinion it is simpler to ascribe these verses to P. To do this two problems have to be solved: the presence of pure and impure animals in v. 8a and the doublet itself. In fact it is these two main elements that lead some to see the hand of J in this passage.

In the first place, the vocabulary "pure-impure" in 7:8 can be misleading (*הבהמה אשר איננה טהרה* and *הבהמה הטהורה*). It seems almost literally to go back to the instructions in v. 7:2 (J)²¹. However, similarities in vocabulary must not hide difference in content. In reality, the text in 7:8 rejects the difference introduced by the divine order in 7:2. In the latter verse Yhwh gives orders to take seven couples of pure animals and only one couple of impure animals whereas in 7:8 it is said that Noah took pure and impure animals on board the ark, without making any distinction between them. The divine order was concerned essentially with the number of animals to be selected in each case, and that is the only thing that 7:8–9 does not mention. V. 9 even gives one to understand that Noah simply took one couple of pure and impure animals, because it does not have the seven couples – one couple contrast to be found in v. 7:2. Why do we find only in v. 7:9 the word *שנים* ("two"), and not the word *שבעה* ("seven"), as in 7:2? Lastly, the *שנים שנים* and the verb *בוא* ("enter") in this verse 9 correspond more to the indications in 6:20 (P) than to those in 7:2 (J) which uses the verb *לקח* ("take").

Of course, the final text removes the difficulty because 7:2 and 7:8 are read in sequence and the reader brings back the figures in 7:2 into 7:8. He/she does so almost automatically and often unwittingly. Noah therefore really will have carried out the divine order. But that cannot cancel out the fact that the reader and the reader alone must fill in the gap. Isolated from each other, the two verses state two different things. At this stage it is necessary not to confuse the particular contribution made by each element taken individually and the reading process of the final text. By passing too quickly from one to the other the

¹⁸ For the list of these interferences see A. F. CAMPBELL – M. A. O'BRIEN, *Sources of the Pentateuch: Texts, Introductions, Annotations* (Minneapolis 1993) 196–198, who summarize in a pedagogical way the conclusions of NOTH, *Überlieferungsgeschichte*, 17 and 29.

¹⁹ 7:8; cf. 1:24–25; 6:20; 7:14; 8:17.19; 9:2 (P).

²⁰ 7:9; cf. 1:27; 6:19; 7:16 (P).

²¹ With only one minor difference: 7:2 has *לא טהרה* and 7:8 has *טהרה*. On this same problem cf. BLUM, *Studien*, 284–285.

exegete is likely not to see that the overall impression is the fruit of a clever construction based on what 7:8 passes over in silence²².

As for the doublet itself, it, too, seems more apparent than real. It is in fact a feature of the style proper to the Priestly author. The double account of an event is the sign of the particular importance attached to it by P. This, among other things, emerges from a comparison with Gen 17:23–27. In both cases the construction is identical. It has four elements: 1. A first mention of the event concluding with the formula indicating fulfilment (7:6–9; 17:23). 2. Date (7:5, 11; 17:24–25). 3. The formula *בַּעֲצַם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה*²³. 4. The second description of the event with a preference for the use of the *qatal* instead of *wayyiqtol* (7:13b–16a; 17:26–27). In both cases the first verb, the one which governs the entire sentence, is a *qatal* (בָּא, 7:13; נִמּוֹל, 17:26)²⁴.

This fourth element, the repetition of the same phrase with, as the only important change, the passage from the *wayyiqtol* to the *qatal*, is found in some other priestly texts. Each time it is a question of an important moment in the story. The first example comes in Gen 2:2–3, describing the divine rest on the seventh day; the text twice uses the verb שָׁבַת and repeats the same syntagma: *כִּי בּו שְׁבַת מִכָּל מְלָאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר־בְּרָא* (2:2) and *וַיִּשְׁבַּת ... מִכָּל־מְלָאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה* (2:3). The story of the burial of Abraham in the cave of Machpelah provides a second example: *שָׁמָּה קָבַר אַבְרָהָם; וַיִּקְבְּרוּ אֹתוֹ* (25:9–10)²⁵. The third example of the same procedure introduces a slight variant. Exod 39:32, 42–43 concludes the whole section describing the construction of the tent of meeting with a three-fold use of the formula indicating fulfilment. In this very solemn concluding

²² WESTERMANN, *Genesis 1*, 579–580, insists on the redactional work in these verses. The final text is not a combination of J and P but the original creation by R (redactor). The same reaction in WENHAM, *Genesis 1*, 178, who draws on stylistic studies by F.I. ANDERSEN, *The Sentence in Biblical Hebrew* (Den Haag 1974) 124–125, and M. KESSLER, “Rhetorical Criticism of Gen 7,” *Rhetorical Criticism: Essays in Honor of J. Muilenburg* (eds. J.J. JACKSON – M. KESSLER) (Pittsburgh 1974) 1–17, esp. 2–9.

²³ On this formula see McEVENUE, *Narrative Style*, 61–62, n. 55. Both sections of Gen 17: 23–27 start by using this same formula (17:23, 26). In Gen 7:6–16a P repeats Noah’s age at the beginning of each paragraph (7:5, 11) and the formula indicating fulfilment at the end (7:9, 16a). This makes it possible to give a different solution to the problem posed by BLUM, *Studien*, 281–282, on 7:6, 11.

²⁴ C.F. KEIL, *Genesis*, (BC I,1; Leipzig 1878) 116, translates v. 13 with a pluperfect: “An diesem selbigen Tag war Noah [...] gekommen in die Arche”; cf. DILLMANN, *Genesis*, 144, who supposes that the text was thus read by the “Harmonist” (the editor). BUDDÉ, *Urgeschichte*, 263, criticizes KEIL; G.J. SPURRELL, *Notes on the Text of the Book of Genesis* (Oxford 1896) 82, prefers the perfect (“came”). U. CASSUTO, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis. II: From Noah to Abraham VI 9–XI 32* (Jerusalem 1964) 91, declines to translate with a pluperfect in 7:13, judging that the difference between the verbal forms does not justify it. The following, however, translate in this way: *Einheitsübersetzung; NAB*; B. JACOB, *Das erste Buch der Tora. Genesis* (Berlin 1934) 206; E.A. SPEISER, *Genesis* (AB 1; New York 1964) 48.

²⁵ As far as this text is priestly. Cf. E. BLUM, *Die Komposition der Vätergeschichte* (WMANT 57; Neukirchen-Vluyn 1984) 441–446 (with bibliography).

section the first verb is a *wayyiqtol*: וַיֵּשֶׁב (39:32a); the same verb appears four times later on in the *qatal* form (עָשָׂה: 39:32b, 42, 43[2x])²⁶.

To return to Gen 6–9 and 17, these two texts have more than one point in common. In fact they contain the only two conclusions of a בריתה in the Priestly Writer. Each of these “oaths” is accompanied by a sign, the rainbow and circumcision²⁷. Noah and Abraham are both characterized in a similar way. What is said of Noah is asked of Abraham: to be perfect and to walk with his God. Gen 6:9 in fact says of Noah: אִישׁ צַדִּיק תְּמוּם הָיָה ... אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים הִתְהַלֵּךְ־נִחַ

The essential part of this description comes again in what Yhwh says to Abraham, but in inverse order and with a slight variation: הִתְהַלֵּךְ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה תְּמוּם (17:1b)²⁸. In the Priestly Writer, these two elements have common characteristics. With Noah’s entry into the ark the second stage of universal history starts. Those entering into the ark with Noah will be the ancestors of humankind and the post-diluvian world. As for circumcision, it marks the beginning of the history of the people of Israel. Noah and Abraham both come at the beginning of a new stage in the priestly history of salvation²⁹.

For all these reasons it is therefore more reasonable to see a priestly text in Gen 7:7–9. In this section only 7:10, 12, 16b certainly belong to J. This has the not negligible consequence of depriving J of another essential element in the story, the entry into the ark.

1.2. *The description of the flood in 7:17–18*

In general, the authors ascribe v. 17b to J and v. 18 to P.V. 17a is disputed. However, this division once again rests on the supposition that the story necessarily consists of two complete “sources.” So a doublet to the description of the flood has to be found and one discovers it in vv. 17b and 18³⁰. We shall first deal with v. 17a before tackling the more important problem in vv. 17b–18.

V. 17a causes a difficulty because of the presence of the “forty days,” a number that certainly belongs to J (7:3, 12). The simplest solution was suggested by Budde³¹. V. 17a is necessary in the priestly flood story. It takes up

²⁶ On this use of the formula indicating fulfilment in P see MCEVENUE, *Narrative Style*, 51–54; F. GARCÍA LÓPEZ, “צִוִּי,” *TWAT* VI, 944–947.

²⁷ On this similarity see W. GROSS, “Bundeszeichen und Bundesschluß in der Priesterschrift,” *TTZ* 87 (1978) 98–115; P. WEIMAR, “Gen 17 und die priesterschriftliche Abrahams-geschichte,” *ZAW* 100(1988) 22–60, esp. 57–58.

²⁸ The preposition is different in both cases: אֶת (6:9) and לִפְנֵי (17:1).

²⁹ On the importance of the entry into the ark see MCEVENUE, *Narrative Style*, 61; WESTERMANN, *Genesis 1*, 586; GARCÍA LÓPEZ, “צִוִּי,” 945–946.

³⁰ Going back as far as HUPFELD, see his *Quellen*, 9, for whom vv. 17 and 18–20 can only come from the same source, because they constitute a “tautology”; see also SCHRADER, *Studien*, 140. The opinion has persisted down to the present day.

³¹ BUDDE, *Urgeschichte*, 265–267.

the description of the flood begun in 7:6, 11 and interrupted by the second description of the entry into the ark (7:13–16a). At the same time, the sentence serves as a proleptic summary to the next section. In J, on the other hand, v. 17a ought to follow v. 12, which would give a tautologous text: “There was heavy rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights” (v. 12) and “The deluge lasted forty days on the earth” (v. 17). According to Budde, the words “forty days” may have been introduced by an editor who wanted to harmonize the two texts and so made the forty days in 7:4, 12 into an episode of the flood within the priestly chronology³². Still more simply, in our hypothesis, this editor could be the editor of the post-priestly “J” fragments. Or again, 7:17a may belong entirely to the priestly account and, still in our hypothesis, the J fragments could have been inspired by this fact to create their own chronology³³. Whatever may be the decision, a difficult one to take, it has no immediate bearing on our subject³⁴.

As for vv. 17b–18, there is no reason for seeing a doublet in them. In fact, dividing them into sources destroys a text cleverly constructed to depict gradually the rise of the waters. First of all, in v. 17b, the waters rise high enough to raise the ark which thus no longer rests on the ground. In v. 18 the waters continue to rise and the ark floats on the surface of the waters. Finally, in vv. 18–19, the third stage, the waters rise so that they cover the peaks of the mountains. V. 20 gives lastly the greatest extent reached by the waters. Next (v. 21), the story describes the destruction of all living creatures.

The style of this section shows a clear movement of progression. The word מים sets the tone for the whole passage (4 times in 7:17a–19). Next, each sentence takes up the verb of the previous one and prolongs it. Thus the verb רבה (“to increase”) in v. 17b is taken up by v. 18a. This latter introduces the verb גבר (“to prevail,” “to dominate”), which will be taken up in v. 19a. In the same way the verb כסה (“to cover”) which appears in v. 19 will be repeated in v. 20:

³² BUDDÉ, *Urgeschichte*, 246; SKINNER, *Genesis*, 165, followed by WESTERMANN, *Genesis I*, 588.

³³ Gen 7:17a is entirely priestly, according to K. ELLIGER, “Sinn und Ursprung der priesterlichen Geschichtserzählung,” *ZTK* 49 (1952) 121–142, 121 = *Kleine Schriften zum Alten Testament* (TBü 32; München 1966) 174–198, 174; McEVENUE, *Narrative Style*, 62; N. LOHFINK, “Die Priesterschrift und die Geschichte,” *Congress Volume Göttingen 1977* (Hrsg. W. ZIMMERLI) (VTS 29; Leiden 1978) 189–255, 198, n. 29 = *Studien zum Pentateuch*, 222, n. 29; P. WEIMAR, “Struktur und Komposition der priesterschriftlichen Geschichtsdarstellung,” *BN* 23 (1984) 81–134, 85, n. 18.

³⁴ There is another intervention of the same order in 7:22: נשמדדו חיים which unites the expressions found in J (2:7: נשמדדו חיים and in P (6:17; 7:15 חיים). See SCHRADER, *Studien*, 141, followed by the majority of exegetes. Cf. also the word מים in 6:17 and 7:6: explanatory notes to מובול which may be suggested by מים המובול, an expression found in P (7:7 [according to our hypothesis]; 9:11; cf. 9:15) and J (7:10). Likewise, in Gen 6–9, the word מים is always associated with the word מובול, even in 7:17a (cf. 7:17b) and 9:11b (cf. 9:11a). Thereafter, it is no more the case (9:28; 10:1, 32; 11:10; cf. Ps 29:10). The author of these interventions may be a later editor, without prejudging his identity here.

17b:		וירבו המים
18:		ויגברו המים וירבו
19:	ויכסו	והמים גברו
20:	ויכסו	גברו המים

The adverbs underline this progression. The verb וירבו in v. 17a is used on its own; it is accompanied by the adverb מאד in v. 18a; this same adverb reappears, doubled (מאד מאד), in v. 19, joined to the verb גברו:

17:	וירבו המים
18:	וירבו מאד
19:	והמים גברו מאד מאד

Lastly, indications of place could hardly be clearer: the ark is raised “off the earth” (מעל הארץ) in v. 17b; this expression comes again, slightly modified, in v. 18a: “the waters increased greatly *over the earth*” (על־הארץ); in that way the ark can float “on the surface of the waters” (על־פני המים) (v. 18b); finally, the expression על־הארץ comes again a third time in v. 20 with the mention of the mountains: “the increase in the waters had intensified very, very much on the earth.” The last indication of place comes in v. 19b: there is only water “under the whole heaven” (תחת כל־השמים)³⁵.

It is difficult not to see here a skilful work of composition. V. 17b is linked with the following verses, among other things, by taking up the verb רבה in v. 18 and the expression על־הארץ in vv. 18–19. On the other hand the text contains no contradiction or any real repetition or tautology³⁶. This is why there is no reason for dividing it into two sources.

1.3. *The end of the flood (8:2–3)*

Here, Hupfeld is very sincere. He admits to having done everything he could to find a J text in these verses and to having succeeded³⁷. It is therefore the independent source hypothesis that drove this exegete to find two parallel accounts of the drop in the level of the waters. Do we have to fall into step with him like the majority of his colleagues? That does not seem obvious.

First of all, 8:2b certainly belongs to J because of גשם (“heavy rain”), which corresponds to its concept of the flood (7:3, 12)³⁸. Does one have to grant it v. 3b as well? Hupfeld sees a doublet in 8:3a and 8:3b, 5, that is to say two com-

³⁵ For more details, see KESSLER, “Gen 7,” 11–12.

³⁶ This is HUPFELD’s opinion, *Quellen*, 9.

³⁷ HUPFELD, *Quellen*, 133: “Jedenfalls aber wird dadurch für die Urkunde Jhwh [J] eine noch fehlende Angabe des Abnehmens gewonnen, und daher in ihrem Namen mit Dank angenommen.”

³⁸ The verse fits very well into the context. The final text suggests that the end of the rain is linked to the closure of the fountains of the deep and the flood-gates of heaven (8:2a – P). See BUDE, *Urgeschichte*, 267: “Eine geschickte Ergänzung.”

plete descriptions of the decrease in the level of the waters. Moreover, there would be a contradiction between 8:3a and 8:3b. The first half-verse describes the slow drop in the level of the waters, and thus supposes a long lapse in time, whereas the second seems to go back to resume the description at the beginning and point out when the waters began to go down. As the date of v. 8:3b obliges one to see a P text in it, 8:3a necessarily therefore belongs to J. The construction with the infinitive absolute in v. 3a comes again in a P text in 8:5, but it is also present in a J text like Gen 12:9, in reality closer to 8:3a than 8:5a³⁹.

These arguments, however, are not compelling⁴⁰. The difficulties disappear when one carefully studies the construction of the passage. P in fact is describing twice, in a parallel fashion, the fall in the level of the waters and, each time, following the cause/effect scheme. In the first case, “God remembers” and sends the wind on earth (8:1ab α : cause); in consequence, the waters diminish (8:1b β : effect). Then follows a second exposé that adds other details. The cause is not only the wind but the closure of the fountains of the deep and the lock-gates of heaven (8:2a). The effect is the slow ebb of the waters (8:3a). 8:1 and 8:2a, 3a are therefore constructed exactly on the same model.

What follows, in this case 8:3b–5, 13–14, is to be understood as the detailed account of the same events until the complete drying up of the waters, an account that develops the “proleptic summaries” of vv. 2b β and especially 3a⁴¹. P on several occasions has recourse to “proleptic summaries” in its account of the flood, as in 7:5, 17a; 8:13a; 9:1; in the divine addresses in 9:9⁴². It is to be noted that the rise in the level of the waters was already accompanied by two “proleptic summaries”, 7:6 and 7:17a.

To this we add another reason. If J, as we have seen above, does not describe the rise of the waters, it is therefore no more surprising that it does not describe their fall⁴³. This source confines itself only to signalling the end of the rain (8:2b), rain announced by Yhwh in 7:4 and which began in 7:12. This is the strongest argument in favour of our hypothesis.

³⁹ HUPFELD, *Quellen*, 132–133; SCHRADER, *Studien*, 141–142; BUDDE, *Urgeschichte*, 268.

⁴⁰ See BUDDE's hesitations, *Urgeschichte*, 268.

⁴¹ On the “proleptic summaries” see N. LOHFINK, “Dtn 28:69 – Überschrift oder Kolophon?,” *BN* 64 (1992) 40–52; N.M. SARNA, “The Anticipatory Use of Information as a Literary Feature of the Genesis Narratives,” *The Creation of Sacred Literature: Composition and Redaction of the Biblical Text* (ed. R. E. FRIEDMAN) (Near Eastern Studies 22; Berkeley 1981) 76–82; J.-L. SKA, “Sommaires proleptiques en Gn 27 et dans l’histoire de Joseph,” *Bib* 73 (1992) 518–527; Id., “Quelques exemples de sommaires proleptiques dans les récits bibliques,” *Congress Volume – Paris 1992* (VTS 61; Leiden 1995) 315–326.

⁴² Elsewhere, see Gen 1:1; 17:1; 35:9, the formula *הַלְדוּת* (Gen 25:13; 36:10; 46:8; Exod 1:1 ...), the itinerary formula in the desert (Exod 15:22; 16:1; 17:1; 19:1–2 ...).

⁴³ See above, 6, on 7:17b.

1.4. *The drying out of the soil (8:13–14)*

For Hupfeld, these two verses are part of the priestly account⁴⁴. It is only from the time of Schrader that v. 13b, where Noah opens the roof of the ark to see the land dry up, was to be ascribed to J⁴⁵. He gives three reasons for his choice. Attention to details is the mark of J, not of P. The expression *פני האדמה* is unusual in the priestly account and proper to J. Why does v. 13b repeat literally what v. 13a says? Besides, the same statement that the earth is dry comes one last time in v. 14b, with slightly different wording⁴⁶. Schrader's position has brought about unanimity.

Here as elsewhere it seems that the theory of sources has prevailed over an attentive study of the stylistic construction of the text. The first argument seems specious. In fact, in the account of the flood the priestly account is more detailed, whereas the account called J is more than succinct⁴⁷. On the other hand, J, to which the "scene with birds" (8:6–12) is ascribed, speaks of a "window" (8:6). Why does Noah have to lift up the roof if he can see through the window? And besides, he could already have ascertained that the earth ought to be dry after the sending out of the dove (8:11–12). The roof (*מכסה*) is a frequent word in the priestly account of the building of the tent and corresponds to the *צהר* in 6:16⁴⁸.

As for the word *אדמה*, it should not cause too much surprise in P. The latter uses it with the root *רמש* ("that which crawls on the ground")⁴⁹. Moreover it readily alternates the terms *אדמה* and *ארץ* with this root *רמש*. In general, the first use of the root is followed by the word *אדמה* (1:25; 6:20; 7:8; 9:2). Next, P uses the word *ארץ*: 1:26, 28, 30 after 1:25; 7:14, 21; 8:17, 19 after 7:8 (and 6:20). We have here a good example of the style of P which likes, contrary to what may be thought, to introduce some variety into its system⁵⁰. It is therefore not surprising to find a similar alternation in 8:13–14.

In fact, P never repeats exactly the same thing in the same words. The first time, it uses the verb *חרב* with the expression *מעל-ארץ*; the second, it takes up the same verb again but with another formula, *פני האדמה*; lastly, the third time,

⁴⁴ HUPFELD, *Quellen*, 11. See also J. WELLHAUSEN, *Die Composition des Hexateuchs und der historischen Bücher des Alten Testaments* (Berlin 1866, 31899) 2.

⁴⁵ SCHRADER, *Studien*, 145–146.

⁴⁶ The verb *יבש* (14b) replaces the verb *חרב* (13b).

⁴⁷ WESTERMANN, *Genesis I*, 588, says that J is "äußerst sparsam" and that the description in P is, on the contrary, "wortreich," while being "monoton."

⁴⁸ For *מכסה* see the later priestly texts: Exod 26:14; 35:11; 36:19; 39:34; 40:19; Num 3:25; 4, 8, 10, 11, 12, 25. For the translation of *צהר* – "roof," see E. ZURRO, "Siete Hápax en el libro del Génesis," *EstBib* 51 (1993) 117–130, esp. 120–122.

⁴⁹ Gen 6:20; 7:8; 9:2; see also 1:25. A fact noted by DILLMANN, *Genesis*, 142 and 148.

⁵⁰ MCEVENEUE, *Narrative Style*, 50, defines this style as: "Its essence is variety within system."

it prefers the verb יבש to the verb חרב, and it can therefore take up the word יבש from v. 13a again:

13a:	חרבו המים מעל-הארץ	
13b:	פני האדמה	חרבו
14:	הארץ	יבשה

There is a progression in this scene, too, as in 7:17–19. In the first place, the narrator points out that the earth is drying out. Next, Noah takes note of the fact. There is therefore no repetition or tautology but a change of perspective: what was said by the narrator is seen by the person who, in fact, is the first person concerned by the event. This change of perspective is denoted by the particle והנה which follows the verb וירא⁵¹. P had used the same narrative technique in 6:11–12. In v. 11 the narrator states first that the earth is corrupt “in the sight of God.” It is only in v. 12 that God becomes aware of this state of affairs. The change of perspective, from the narrator to God the “character”, is also indicated by construction והנה [...] וירא. Finally, the verbs חרב and יבש in 8:13–14 correspond to two stages in the drying up of the waters: the first verb describes the process (“to dry up”) and the second, a stative verb, the final result (“to be dry”)⁵². In conclusion, it is more reasonable to ascribe the whole of vv. 13–14 to P.

To complete our analysis we still have to deal with two particular problems in fragments called J, that is to say ascribing 7:22–23 and 8:6–12 to that layer.

1.5. The destruction of the universe (7:22–23)

Only v. 22 poses a problem. V. 21 is certainly priestly, as is confirmed by its vocabulary, among other things the use of the verb גוע (“to expire”)⁵³. As regards v. 23, it is J by reason of the verb מחה and the rare word יקום (see 6:7; 7:4). We shall speak later on about the priestly expressions in this verse⁵⁴. On v. 22 the critics have hesitated⁵⁵. It was Budde who settled the matter in favour of J with a line of argument that from then on settled the choices of criticism⁵⁶. The

⁵¹ On this procedure, see J.-L. SKA, “Our Fathers have Told Us.” *Introduction to the Analysis of Hebrew Narratives* (SubBib 13; Rome 1990) 68.

⁵² See O. KAISER, “חרב I,” *TWAT* III, 160–164; SPEISER, *Genesis*, 53. The two verbs appear together in some poetic texts: Isa 19:5; 44:27; Jer 51:36; Job 14:11; in inverse order to Gen 8: Hos 13:15; Nah 1:4.

⁵³ See Gen 6:17; 25:8.17; 35:29; 49:33. For the rest of the vocabulary see Gen 1:20–21; 6:17.19–20 ...

⁵⁴ It is mainly a question of the root רמש.

⁵⁵ In favour of P we have; HUPFELD, *Quellen*, 10–11; 136; SCHRADER, *Studien*, 140–141; T. NÖLDEKE, *Untersuchungen zur Kritik des Alten Testaments* (Kiel 1869) 11–12; in favour of J: DILLMANN, *Genesis*, 145; WELLHAUSEN, *Composition*, 4; E. REUSS, *L’histoire sainte et la loi (Pentateuque et Josué)* (Paris 1879) 316.

⁵⁶ BUDDE, *Urgeschichte*, 265. Read Exod 14:21 instead of Num 14:21.

verb *נוה* is parallel to the verb *נוע* and is a useless repetition for it. The word *הרבה* is proper to J (Exod 14:21; Josh 3:17; 4:18: JE) while P generally uses *יבשה* (Gen 1:9, 10)⁵⁷. Only the syntagma *רוח חיים* recalls P (6:17; 7:15). V. 22a may be redactional, uniting the priestly expression *רוח חיים* (6:17; 7:15) with a formula in J, *נשמת-חיים באפיו* (cf. 2:7)⁵⁸. To sum up, it is difficult not to go along with Budde, especially because of the presence in this verse of elements which can hardly belong to P, the formula *נשמת-חיים באפיו* [...], and the word *הרבה*⁵⁹. Moreover, if the verse were priestly, one would all the more expect to find a text closer to the usual expression in the Priestly Writer, *כל-בשר אשר-רוח*, *רוח חיים* (6:17; 7:15). If, on the whole, 7:22 is not priestly it is therefore J, with perhaps a trace of editorial work (*נשמת-רוח חיים באפיו*).

1.6. *The scene with the birds (8:6–12)*

Along with the majority of exegetes, we still think that this scene does not belong to P. Hupfeld has provided the main arguments in favour of this opinion⁶⁰. The style is different; it is not content with essentials but is more attentive to picturesque detail. The numbers seven (8:10, 12) and forty (8:6) are characteristic of J⁶¹. Schrader added an important element: 8:6 speaks of a “window” (*חלון*) whereas the priestly account of the building of the ark mentions a *צהר* (6:16) but not a window⁶². The problem of a possible doublet in this scene does not concern us immediately; besides, the Mesopotamian parallels incline one to consider the present text as unified⁶³.

1.7. *Conclusion*

In conclusion, the following verses belong to P: 6:9–22; 7:6–9, 11, 13–16a, 17 (probably without “forty days”), 18–21, 24; 8:1–2a, 3–5, 13–19; 9:1–3, 7–17, and the following to J: 6:5–8; 7:1–5, 10, 12, 16b, 22*–23; 8:2b, 6–12, 20–22. A later editor, who is perhaps the editor of the J fragments, has undoubtedly

⁵⁷ In confirmation, see Exod 14:15, 22, 29 (P) and 14:21a (J).

⁵⁸ See above, 5, n. 34. See also P. WEIMAR, *Untersuchungen zur Redaktion des Pentateuch* (BZAW 146; Berlin – New York 1977) 146; J. BRIEND, “Lecture du Pentateuque et hypothèse documentaire,” *Le Pentateuque. Débats et recherches* (éd. P. HAUDEBERT) (LD 151; Paris 1992) 21–22 (intervention by an editor).

⁵⁹ For the problem posed by the verbal form *נוה*, see C. RABIN, “The Ancient Versions and the Indefinite Subject,” *Textus* 2 (1962) 60–76.

⁶⁰ HUPFELD, *Quellen*, 10–11, sees a doublet in these verses: the episode of the raven (8:6–7, J) is parallel to that of the dove (8:8–12, P). He changes his mind pp. 134–136. See also SCHRADER, *Studien*, 143–145; BUDDE, *Urgeschichte*, 271–272.

⁶¹ Seven: 7:4, 10; cf. 7:2. Forty: 7:4, 12; cf. 7:17a.

⁶² SCHRADER, *Studien*, 143.

⁶³ See WESTERMANN, *Genesis 1*, 597, for the discussion.

done something in 7:17 (“forty days”), 7:22 (נשמתי-רוח חיים), in 6:17 and 7:6 (בַּיּוֹם). Lastly, a priestly *halaka* is to be found in 9:4–6⁶⁴.

We are now in a position to deal with the questions concerning the nature of the verses ascribed to source J.

2. The “Yahwistic” (J) texts do not form a complete story

This has often been noted and we can only repeat what has been said elsewhere. Two important elements are missing in the J account: the description of the building of the ark and leaving the ark⁶⁵. In general, exegetes suppose that in these two cases the final editor preferred the priestly account and removed the J one. This explanation, however, is unsatisfactory and the classic hypothesis hardly avoids contradiction. To show this we therefore remain within the system proposed by the documentary hypothesis. We must first ask why the editor went about it in this way only in these two cases, whereas he retained so many other doublets in the story. Perhaps it was difficult to keep two sets of divine instructions about the construction of the ark in one story. But that is less comprehensible in what concerns leaving the ark because the story, according to the opinion we are discussing, contains two descriptions of the entry into the ark (7:7–9 [J]; 7:13–16 [P]). It would be quite normal for the story to mention the pure and impure animals leaving the ark just before Noah offers the sacrifice in 8:20 since it had taken the trouble to record their entry (7:8; cf. 7:2). Not so. The logic of these choices is not obvious and no doubt we have to resign ourselves to saying that the J account is either lacking in clarity or is incomplete. Furthermore, we have seen that it does not contain the account of the entry into the ark, leaving the ark, the rise and fall of the water-level and the drying out of the earth. This proves sufficiently that there is no “J” story of the flood parallel to the one in P.

3. The late vocabulary of the “Yahwistic” (J) fragments in Gen 6–9

Many expressions used by the J account, as it is called, on analysis are shown to date from a late period; moreover, they do not occur in other texts that clas-

⁶⁴ See above n. 9, for 9:4–6. WESTERMANN’S objections, *Genesis I*, 620–621, are refuted by LOHFINK, “Schichten des Pentateuch,” 88, n. 78 = *Studien zum Pentateuch*, 291, n. 78.

⁶⁵ See, for example, WESTERMANN, *Genesis I*, 535.