

## THE PROMISE NARRATIVES IN GENESIS(2)\*

### THE JACOB CYCLE OF NARRATIVES (28, 10-35, 29)

IN THIS cycle or group of narratives there are to be included those narrative-units which have Jacob as their central figure. It is not easy at times to make a choice since, as in the case of the Isaac-cycle, Jacob's story is intertwined with that of Joseph on whom the interest in definitely shifted from chapter 37 onwards. This section includes therefore no less than ten narratives: Jacob migrates into Haran (28, 10-22); He meets Rachel (29, 1-14); He marries Rachel and Lia (29, 15-30, 14); Increase of Jacob's herds (30, 25-43); Jacob returns to Canaan and strikes a pact with Laban (31, 1-55); Meeting of Jacob and Esau (32, 1-33, 16); Jacob settles in central Canaan (33, 17-20); Violation of Dinah (34, 1-31); Jacob returns to Bethel (35, 1-15); The patriarch moves to Bethlehem (35, 16-26).

#### PROMISE TEN

##### Jacob migrates into Haran (28, 10-22)

The tenth promise is found in the narrative of Jacob's flight into Mesopotamia; he is fleeing from the wrath of his brother Esau, in contrast to what is said in 27, 46, that is, that he migrated to fetch a wife out of his own kindred. According to 28, 10 Jacob moves to Haran as he was commanded to do by his own mother Rebecca (27, 43) after having secured for himself the blessing of his father (27, 1-40); according to 27, 46-28, 9 however Jacob is requested by his father to get married to one of his own tribe. Hence the section 27, 46-28, 9 forms a unit by itself distinct from the rest of its actual context. Therefore 27, 1-45; 28, 10-22 is a homogeneous narrative which includes Isaac's blessing of his two sons. This does not exclude any later additions by way of glosses or scribal errors; although critics generally agree as to the composite character of this section, yet they disagree as to the analysis.

##### The Promise (28, 12-15)

Jacob stops at Bethel to rest for the night; during his sleep God appears to him in a vision of the night and grants him this promise. The main objects of the promise are *land* and *posterity*; to these is added

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*protection.* The patriarch himself is not blessed but he would be a source of blessing to all the nations of the world. All this would happen in fulfilment of God's promises to Abraham.

### Literary Structure

This promise is more elaborately constructed. There are several titles attached to the name of God: He is the God of Abraham; the God of Isaac. The order of the objects is: Land, posterity, blessing, protection. Each of these objects is qualified by additional material by way of appositions or relative clauses. Land is the one on which Jacob is lying; the patriarch's posterity would be as numerous as the dust of the earth, and would occupy the whole earth to the south, east and west. The importance of the land is brought forward by putting the noun ארץ right at the beginning of the promise; a relative clause follows; then a verbal sentence with an imperfect cohortative closes the first part. The section dealing with posterity consists of two coordinated verbal sentences each containing a perfect consecutive. The blessing of the tribes of the earth through Jacob is expressed by the niphal perfect consecutive of בָּרַךְ. The part referring to protection is formed of one nominal sentence and six verbal ones. It is introduced by הִנֵּה. The general expression אֲנִי אֶבְרָכְךָ follows; this statement is further specified.

### PROMISE ELEVEN

#### Jacob at Bethel (35, 1-15)

This promise has as its proper background the group of narratives of Jacob's wanderings in Canaan after his return from Mesopotamia. The promise itself however has certain peculiarities separating it from the rest of the context. In v. 1 the place where God had appeared to Jacob was already named Bethel; in v. 15 it is Jacob who goes to Luz and changes this name into Bethel, although it was already named so by Jacob on his way to Laban (28, 19); v. 6 *the same is Bethel* and v. 7 *and he built there an altar and called the place אֵל-בֵּית-אֵל* (Kittel suppresses אֵל). Moreover God commands Jacob to build an altar אֲבִיבָה (28, 18), whilst in v. 14 Jacob erected a commemorative stone אֲבִיבָה. Hence the story embedding the promise, short as it is, stands by itself. In fact the reading in v. 9 *and God appeared unto Jacob again when he came from Paddan-Aran and blessed him* seems to be the introduction to a new narrative were it not for הִנֵּה, which may be a redactional element connecting the new material with its new context. In the preceding story we read about the erection of an altar; here about the change of Jacob's

name into Israel, already accounted for in 32, 28 and about the renewal of the promises granted in the past to Abraham and Isaac.

### The Promise (35, 9-15)

The main object is *posterity*, hence it is found right at the beginning, to be followed then by the promise of the *land*, which had already been given to Abraham and Isaac in the past. The change of name is also to be noted as in v. 17.

### Literary Structure

The first part, consisting of one nominal sentence and two verbal ones, refers to a change of name; an explanation is forthcoming for such a change. The second part introduced by אֲנִי אֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל deals with posterity and the possession of land. There are no less than four verbal sentences. It is remarkable to note pairs of synonyms: פָּרָא וְרִבְהָ. The third part has as its object the possession of the land; it is built up of two verbal sentences, one principal and the other a subordinate relative clause qualifying land. The style in general is quite verbose, full of apparently useless and pointless repetitions which are actually meant for emphasis.

Other features to be noted are the name of God אֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל and the verbs used to denote posterity פָּרָה and רִבְהָ. The land is connected to former promises by an adjectival relative clause. The stress is on land; posterity follows afterwards.

## PROMISE TWELVE

### Jacob migrates into Egypt (46, 1-7)

On his way to Egypt to visit Joseph, his son, Jacob stops at Beer-sheba to offer sacrifice to *the God of his father Isaac*: there Isaac had dwelt for a considerable time. In a vision of the night בְּמִרְאֵת חֲזוֹן לַיְלָה God appears to him to encourage him to proceed to Egypt, promising him help, protection and a safe return to Canaan. The relation of this narrative to the rest of the narrative of Joseph will be studied further on.

### The Promise (46, 1-4)

The main object therefore is posterity, the nation to be formed in the land of Egypt: Protection and peaceful death are also added. God is keen on introducing the patriarch to proceed towards Egypt without any misgivings; hence constant support is promised.

### Literary Structure

The opening sets the whole scene; it is by night that God appears to the patriarch in Beersheba. Here we have what is found in chapter 22; God would call the patriarch by name  $\text{בְּרַעְיָא בְּרַעְיָא}$  who would reply by the exclamation  $\text{יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ}$ . God would answer by presenting himself as *the God of his father*.

A negative by an imperfect preceded by  $\text{לֹא}$  follows: *not to fear to go into Egypt*. The promise comes next; it is introduced by the affirmative particle  $\text{וְ}$ ; the promise proper is given only in four words. Afterwards is given the promise of help and support, formed of three verbal sentences.

One should note the way numerous posterity is expressed; the verb  $\text{וַיְהִי}$  and  $\text{וַיִּלְד}$  as its object. There are no titles for God except the relative clauses connecting Him with the father of Jacob. The language in general is very simple.

### PROMISE THIRTEEN

#### Jacob blesses Joseph (48, 1-7)

Jacob is in Egypt on his death bed. He calls Joseph unto himself to impart his blessing on him as Isaac had done on his own sons. The patriarch refers to the blessing and promises granted to him by God at Luz or Bethel. This promise hence is one with that in chapter 35; note the absence of the name Bethel, for which there stands Luz, the older name. Its context cannot be extended beyond v. 7 because of the reading in v. 8 *and Israel saw Joseph's sons and said* following closely on the blessing or rather the adoption of Manasseh and Ephraim in vv. 3-6. Perhaps the original narrative starts with 48, 1.

#### The Promise (48, 1-7)

God blesses Jacob, that is, *greet*s him; hence no blessing for the future but a blessing for the present. It is an act of graciousness on the part of God. The effect of this act is the promise itself. God promises him a numerous *posterity* and the *land* to be inherited by his seed after him.

#### Literary Structure

The structure of this promise is influenced by the fact that it is an account rendered by the patriarch and not a direct report of the event by the writer. It opens with the blessing of Jacob; then God's promise of *posterity* and *land* follows.

The expressions of posterity are  $\text{וַיְהִי לְךָ בָנִים}$  an active participle coordin-

ated with a perfect consecutive; and  $\text{לְקַחְלָךְ אֶת הָאָרֶץ}$ . The term of land is *this land*; it is the object of a perfect consecutive; to  $\text{וְיָרְדוּ לְךָ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל}$  is added  $\text{וְיָרְדוּ לְךָ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל}$  and then the phrase  $\text{לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד}$  to possess it for ever.

Comparing together the features of the several promises just enumerated we may conclude that the promises taken together have a three-fold element, that is, *blessing, land and posterity* and other secondary elements of minor importance or less frequent occurrence. They are features common practically to all the promises but expressed in various ways: A given group of promises stresses one point, another group stresses another. Certain expressions are found in one group and not in another. These peculiarities afford us clues for grouping the promises in three different categories each with its own characteristics.

#### GROUP C

The first group, which we call henceforth group C, includes promises 4, 9, 11, 13 which are easily distinguishable from the rest. The main objects occur steadily in this order: *blessing, posterity and land*, hence we shall take them in this order.

*Blessing*: A careful analysis of the texts would show us that strictly speaking there is no promise of any blessing in this group; it is rather a question of an internal act of graciousness on the part of God towards the patriarchs; thus in pr. (= promise) 4 Abraham is not blessed, but only Sarah and Ismael: the effect of this blessing on them would be fertility; in pr. 9 Isaac prays for a blessing in favour of Jacob; in pr. 11 God blesses Jacob before promising anything; in pr. 13 Jacob states that God appeared to him and blessed him before the promise proper was granted. Hence promise in this group does not denote future posterity and friendship between God and the patriarchs and their posterity but it is rather an act of friendship and love towards the patriarchs here and now. This divine graciousness is the basic form of the promises. In virtue of this promise the patriarchs would be the progenitors of a numerous posterity. In fact the blessing is always followed by a promise of posterity as its effect; in two cases (pr. 4 and pr. 9) where the blessing forms an integral part of the promise, the words indicating posterity are coordinated with the verb  $\text{בָּרַךְ}$ . In pr. 11 and pr. 13 the blessing does not form part of the promise itself. In these cases we are inclined to take the verb *to bless* in the sense of *to greet*, in itself an act of graciousness, with a real effect on the person blessed.

Blessing in the other promises has another connotation. It features in six of them. God blesses the patriarchs in the future and not now; through them and their posterity this same blessing would pass on to the rest of

the world; thus pr. 1  $\text{בְּרַכְתְּךָ}$ ; prs. 6 and 7  $\text{בְּרַךְ אֶבְרָהָם}$ ; pr. 8  $\text{בְּרַכְתִּי}$ . Moreover others are not directly blessed by God as in C but through the patriarchs: pr. 1  $\text{אֲבִרְכֶם מִבְּרַכְתִּי וְנִבְרַכְתֶּם כֹּל מִשְׁפַּחַת הָאָדָמָה}$ ; pr. 5  $\text{הַתְּבָרַכְוּ בְּזֶרְעֵךָ כֹּל גּוֹי יִי הַזֶּרֶם}$ ; pr. 6  $\text{וְנִבְרַכְוּ בְּוֵי הַזֶּרֶם}$ . In C the blessing is restricted to the patriarchs or to a few individual persons, their immediate descendants; in this group the blessings are promised to all those who would show friendship to the patriarchs.

Blessing may be taken objectively, that is, the objects awarded to the patriarchs by God or subjectively, that is, friendship borne by God to the forebears of Israel. Blessing taken objectively in group C denotes fertility or posterity or the power of posterity. In pr. 9 we read *you will receive the blessings of Abraham* in which case blessing has an objective meaning denoting all the graces and gifts which the bounty of God granted to the patriarch and also the power and strength inseparable from such a blessing.

The effect of the blessing in the other promises is the rendering of the patriarch's name great, powerful amongst the nations; those who would be his friends would share in his glory. Land would be given to the patriarchs and their posterity as a result of the same blessing. There are therefore substantial differences between the meaning of blessing in group C and in the rest of the promises.

The next in order is *posterity*. It enjoys precedence over the possession of land and it is expressed by certain constant and peculiar phrases or words; wherever the verb  $\text{בָּרַךְ}$  occurs there follows posterity as in 17, 20  $\text{וְנִבְרַכְתִּי אִתּוֹ וְנִבְרַכְתִּי אִתּוֹ וְנִבְרַכְתִּי אִתּוֹ}$ ; 28, 3  $\text{וְנִבְרַכְתֶּם בְּזֶרְעֵךָ}$ ; 48, 3  $\text{וְנִבְרַכְתֶּם בְּזֶרְעֵךָ}$ . Posterity is the direct effect of God's blessing which seems to be a new power infused into man.<sup>1</sup>

In the other promises posterity follows the promise of the land: in pr. 1 Abraham is to move to Canaan precisely to have land as a reward and a numerous posterity; so also in pr. 2 land precedes posterity (13 14-17). In pr. 3b the promise is hinged on the land (15, 7ss); then the promise of posterity follows immediately. In pr. 5a there is the promise of a son with reference to posterity; in pr. 5b there is mentioned the glorification of the nation but there is no reference to land; in pr. 7 land is promised before posterity. In pr. 8 there comes forth posterity only. In pr. 10 land again precedes posterity. Pr. 12 deals with the foundation of the nation in Egypt and its return into Canaan. It is clear from all this evidence that the possession of the land was in the forefront of the mind of the writer of the promises not included in group C; the latter however laid stress on posterity. Wherever there occur land and posterity together,

<sup>1</sup> F. Zorell, *Lexicon Hebraicum et Aramaicum*, 1940-ad  $\text{בָּרַךְ}$ .

posterity has the precedence in C; in the rest land is all in all.

God promises a son to Abraham no less than three times: pr. 3a; pr. 4; pr. 5a. In pr. 3a there is a simple promise *He shall not be thy heir, but he that shall come out of thy bowels shall be thine heir* (15, 4). Pr. 4 (17, 16) is directed to Abraham **וְנִחַמְתִּי מִסְפֵּנָה לְךָ בֵּן**; Abraham laughed **וַיִּצְחַק** hence the name Isaac. In pr. 5a (18, 12) laughter occurs again; this time it is Sarah who laughs sceptically **וַתִּצְחַק שָׂרָה בְּקִרְבָּהּ**; the verb **צָחַק** is repeated no less than four times in this context. In 15, 2 lack of faith in Abraham is again betrayed in his disturbing worries about an heir. Pr. 4 therefore, where the name of Isaac is chosen by God himself, is a duplicate of pr. 5a where Sarah takes the leading part. Pr. 3a is again distinguished from pr. 4 because in it one does not meet any time-indication nor is the name of the future son known.

There is a special terminology to indicate posterity peculiar to group C alone. Such terms are frequently and consistently used; the combination **פָּרָה וּרְבָה** is used in all the four promises; **קָחַל גֹּוִים** in the four promises; **קָחַל עַמִּים** in pr. 9 and pr. 13; **נִחַמְתִּי לְגֹוֵי גְדוֹל** in the four promises; **אֲבֵן הַמִּזְוֵן גֹּוִים** in pr. 4; **מִלְכֵי עַמִּים** in pr. 4 and pr. 11. The expressions common to all the four promises of this group are non-existent in the other promises outside this group. Those used in the other promises are: in pr. 1 **גְּדוֹל לְגֹוֵי אֲשֶׁשָׁף** with the connotation of moral greatness inseparable from numbers and **אֲנַדְּדָה לָהּ שָׂמַח** in pr. 2 **וְשִׂמְחִי אֲרָבָה תְּרַבָּה** in pr. 6 **יִהְיֶה לְגֹוֵי גְדוֹל** in pr. 5b **בְּעֶפְרַת אֶת-וּרְעָדָה** in pr. 7 and 8 where comes in the figure of the stars **הַשָּׁמַיִם אֶת-וּרְעָדָה וְהַרְבִּיתִי** in pr. 12 **לְגֹוֵי גְדוֹל אֲשֶׁיִּמְדָה**.

This evidence shows us how these promises in group C are closely knit together through the constant use of the same words and phrases to denote posterity; on the other hand, the others are more rich and varied in their choice of words and, moreover, the use of figurative language, which is totally lacking in C to give place to more verbosity, renders them more colourful.

Land again features in the four promises; it comes next to posterity in contrast to the rest of the promises where it has precedence over posterity. In pr. 1 God promises posterity to Abraham in reward for migrating unto an unknown land which later proves to be the land of Canaan. So also in prs 2, 3b, 7; in pr. 6 there is an indirect reference to land embedded in a context with a rather peculiar way of expressing one's victory over one's enemies and the power and strength consequent on such a victory: **וַיִּרְשׁ וּרְעָדָה אֶת-עַמֵּי אֵיבָיו**.

Hence in this set of promises the possession of the land is of paramount importance; it takes precedence over the numbers of the nation

itself. This is further corroborated by the fact that in pr. 4, which is a long promise, land occurs only once, the rest of the text dealing with the covenant and posterity.

The expressions, three in number, used to denote *this land* are not found in the others, with the exception of ארץ הזאת in pr. 13, which in its turn corresponds to ארץ כנ"ן in pr. 9.

Land in the other promises is indicated by a various number of expressions or words or relative clauses introduced by ארץ: pr. 1a ארץ אשר ארצה; 1b ארץ הזאת; 2 ארץ אשר ראיה לה; 3b ארץ אשר-אפה ראיה לה; 7 ארץ הזאת לרשתה; 10 ארץ אשר אפה שרב עליה (twice) and pr. 10 ארץ אשר אפה שרב עליה.

Land in group C is given to the patriarch to be inherited by his seed after him; the verb יָרַשׁ and the adverb אַחֲרָיָהּ are constantly used. The last adverb does not recur in the other promises; the way of expressing this grant is more varied.

There is a richer terminology to describe the land promised to Abraham and the other patriarchs outside group C; it is never termed the land of Canaan as in C and it is brought in relation with the patriarchs' wanderings only indirectly. There are two categories of determinatives outside C: a pronoun or an adjective is used as ארץ הזאת in prs 1 and 3b and ארץ-הארצה twice in pr. 7. In pr. 1 the land is given only to the seed of Abraham; in 3 and 3b only to the patriarch; in 7 and 10 to the patriarch and his seed. There is no adverb אַחֲרָיָהּ as in C where land is promised to the patriarchs and their posterity at once.

This brief survey leads to the conclusion that notwithstanding that the main objects of the promise in group C and outside it are the same, that is *land*, *posterity* and *blessing*, yet they are not viewed from the same angle. Blessing in C denotes the favourable disposition of God towards the patriarchs, which graciousness is tokened through the promise of posterity and land; blessing therefore gives the patriarchs a new power of regeneration. Outside C blessing has another connotation; it is objective, something real, concrete donated to the patriarchs by God and passed on to their posterity and the rest of mankind. In C posterity is the most important promise and hence it is always put in the foreground; land follows posterity. In the rest land has the precedence over posterity. These main differences in substance are borne out by literary differences. In C the style is fixed and verbose; in the rest it is richer in the choice of words and construction; literary structure in C follows always a fixed pattern, which is not the case in the others. Such a highly imaginative picture of the patriarchs as kings and progenitors of companies of peoples is nowhere else met except in C.



These conclusions are further strengthened by other facts of no less importance, such as the idea of a *covenant*. In ch. 17, i.e. in pr. 4, the covenant is at the basis of the whole promise; in other promises outside group C there is also the idea of a covenant but there are important differences. In pr. 4 Abraham is asked:

- (a) to worship God (17, 7)
- (b) to lead a perfect life (17, 1).

God promises on his part

- (a) posterity
- (b) blessing.

Added to these there is the change of names from Abram to Abraham and from Sara to Sarah; and in pr. 9 Jacob is changed into Israel. The external sign of this covenant would be circumcision. The special name for God is *El Shaddai*. This idea of a covenant or alliance is missing outside C. In pr. 3a God states: *I am . . . thy reward exceedingly great* (15, 1); in pr. 3b there is mentioned a ברית and there are all the external formalities which went with the striking of a contract such as the division of birds and beasts. In pr. 6 there is the divine oath יהוה נשבעתי נאם יהוה and in pr. 7 God refers back to the same oath ונקמתי את-השבועה אשר נשבעתי לאברהם.

Several times the promises are granted in reward for something present or future. None of these covenants has the clear cut conditions and formalities which we find in pr. 4; the conditions in the other promises are vague and partially specified.

Other details confirm our analysis. The promise of Isaac in pr. 4 is parallel to the promise of the same in pr. 5a where we have the same play of words. In pr. 4 Abraham laughs, in pr. 5a Sarah laughs. The name Bethel is given by Jacob to Luz on the occasion of pr. 11; but it was already given to it on the occasion of pr. 10 on his way to Laban's; Jacob's change of name is a duplicate of 32, 28. In group C God is never represented as appearing in any human form: in pr. 4 and in pr. 13 it is simply stated: *God appeared* נראה or נראה and *God disappeared* נעלם; in the others there is an indirect report. No geographical indications are forthcoming for pr. 10, which is again referred to in pr. 13, in contrast to the others which are generally attached to particular places which in later times became important shrines of Israel, such as Sichem pr. 1; Hebron prs 2, 3; Mt Moriah pr. 6; Gerar pr. 7; Beersheba pr. 8 and pr. 12; Bethel pr. 10. In these promises Yahweh appears in a definite form and in a given place at times in a vision by night. They are landmarks in the wandering life of the patriarchs and hence they are attached to particular places; the promises in C, on the other hand, are detached from particular places except one in Bethel, which is twice recorded. All this is

in keeping with its stress on posterity, rather than on the possession of land. Moreover in C, especially in pr. 4, there stands out clearly the idea of election symbolized by the covenant of circumcision. Isaac is the future partner of the covenant or alliance between God and Abraham. Ismael is excluded. This exclusion of the collateral branches is found elsewhere: Abraham himself is called out of his own kindred in pr. 1; he is separated from Lot; Esau is cast out. None of these however is intimately connected with any of the promises except perhaps pr. 1. Lot goes on his own just before the promise is granted; Ismael, after the birth of Isaac on account of Sarah's jealousy; Esau flees from his brother Jacob. Nor is separation accompanied by an external sign as circumcision. Add to this that no other promise outside C refers in any way to this pact of circumcision in pr. 4. In group C the patriarch is always passive: Abraham laughs in pr. 4 but he accepts God's word submissively whereas in pr. 3a and pr. 5 Abraham protests his lack of faith or weak faith; he tries to intercede for Sodom and Gomorrah.

All these facts taken together afford a strong argument for the conclusion that this group C of promises belongs to the same writer or tradition. The four promises are distributed thus: pr. 4 to Abraham, pr. 9 to Isaac, pr. 11 to Jacob, pr. 13 to Joseph, one to each patriarch.

#### GROUPS A AND B

Having grouped these four promises and shown their peculiarities knitting them together and separating them from the others we pass on to examine carefully the rest of the promises, applying the same principles and method of analysis and comparison. We base our analysis on the main objects of the promises, that is, *land, posterity and blessing.*

#### *Land*

Land features only in four out of ten promises. It is described as *this land* אֶרֶץ זוֹ in pr. 1 and pr. 3b; there is אֶרֶץ and a relative clause in pr. 7. In pr. 7 it is referred to as *these lands* אֶרֶצוֹת הַנְּאֻדָּה twice in the same context. In this promise perhaps there is a reference to the oath-promise in pr. 6 about the possession of the enemy's gate by Abraham's posterity. This puts pr. 7 by itself. The land is promised to the patriarch and his seed in three promises; to the patriarch alone in another promise and to his posterity alone in another promise. The term for land is אֶרֶץ except for pr. 10 where we have אֶרֶץ.

#### *Posterity*

Posterity is mentioned in all the promises. We have either a general promise of numerous posterity or the particular promise of a son in the

immediate future. A son is promised twice, in pr. 3a and pr. 5a respectively. In the first one Abraham is worried about the absence of a son to inherit him, but he has as yet not given up hope of having a son. In the other one Abraham and Sarah are both sceptical about the possibility of having a son in their old age. The son is promised to Abraham in pr. 3a and to Sarah in pr. 5a. Abraham believed in the word of God; Sarah remained sceptical and laughed. The laughter of Sarah suggested to them to name him Isaac; the play on the words  $\text{יִצְחָק}$  and  $\text{יִצְחָק}$  is evident. In pr. 3a there is no intimation of the name to be given to the promised son.

The promise of a general posterity is found in all these promises except in pr. 3b where it is clearly implied. The term used to indicate posterity is  $\text{לְגוֹי גָדוֹל}$  in prs 1, 5 and 12;  $\text{וְרַעַל}$  in the rest. In three promises, that is pr. 3a, pr. 6 and pr. 7, the number of the patriarch's descendants is compared to the number of the stars in heaven; in the others to the dust of the earth. In pr. 6 there is added the sand on the shore  $\text{לְאִשֶׁר עַל-שִׁפְתַּת הַיָּם}$  while in pr. 10 one reads  $\text{יָמָה יִפְתָּה}$ . Twice, in pr. 8 and pr. 7, there is the hiphil of  $\text{רָבַה}$  and once  $\text{הִיָּה}$  with a complement. In pr. 7 the promise of posterity comes before that of the land; in the others land always precedes posterity. Where land and posterity are promised as a reward the word  $\text{לְעֵקֶב}$  is used in prs 6 and 7; in pr. 8 the expression  $\text{בְּעֵבֹר צִבְרָתָם}$  is used instead.

### Blessing

Blessing has a special importance in certain promises; it recurs in five promises. In pr. 6 and pr. 7 God blesses the patriarch:  $\text{אֲבִרְכֶךָ}$ , the imperfect *qal* is used; this same blessing is mediated through the patriarch's posterity to the other peoples of the earth:  $\text{הַתְּבָרְכֵי בְּוִרְעָה}$ , the *bitbpael* of  $\text{בָּרַךְ}$  is used for the purpose. In pr. 1 God blesses the patriarch through whom, that is, not through his seed, blessing is passed on to the rest of mankind; the *niphal* of  $\text{בָּרַךְ}$  is used to denote the blessings of the nations.  $\text{לְגוֹי יְהוֹרָג}$  is used in prs 6, 7 and 5; in pr 10 and 1  $\text{מִשְׁפַּחַת הַיְהוּדִים}$ .

Taking *blessing*, *land* and *posterity* together we have these combinations:

(a) Hithpael of  $\text{בָּרַךְ}$  and stars and blessing through seed

(b) Niphal of  $\text{בָּרַךְ}$  and dust and blessing through the patriarchs

The first one is found in prs 6 and 7, the second one in prs 2 and 10.

### The Covenant

This group again includes the idea of a covenant. In pr. 3b God strikes

a אֱלֹהִים with Abraham; in pr. 6 there is the oath of God to confirm the promises. This oath is referred to Isaac in pr. 7. This would separate the more pr. 3a from pr. 3b and unite more closely pr. 6 and pr. 7. In pr. 3a the promises are granted on account of Abraham's faith. In pr. 6 they are granted on account of the obedience of Abraham and in pr. 7 on account of Abraham again; in pr. 12 as a reward for Jacob's going down into Egypt. In pr. 5 Isaac is promised in recognition of the services rendered to the travellers by Abraham and Sarah.

### *The titles of God*

There are five promises (1, 2, 5, 6, 7) without any title or qualification for God and five promises with a title or qualification for Him. These qualifications can be classified into two groups. The first group consists of those titles or qualifications referring to the fathers (prs 8, 10, 12): pr. 8 and pr. 10 are identical, in the latter however there is added the name of Isaac; pr. 12 is quite different, not having any patriarchal name but only אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם. The second group includes references to the past: in pr. 3b God is He who called Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees; in pr. 3a God is Abraham's protector. Through these titles we have therefore these combinations: pr. 8 and pr. 10 belong to the same tradition; pr. 3a is to be separated from pr. 3b where there is no idea of a reward; and pr. 12 is to be separated from pr. 8 and pr. 10 on account of its lack of any patriarchal name. In prs 1, 2, 3b, 5, 8, 10 the name of God is constantly יְהוָה; in prs 3a, 6, 7, 12 there is a variety of names אֱלֹהִים, מַלְאֲכֵי יְהוָה, אֱדֹנָי יְהוָה, אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם.

Sorting and classifying this evidence we find that there are two groups, each distinguished from the other by certain definite characteristics. Thus pr. 6 and pr. 7 go together on account of the literary combination noted above, that is, comparison with the stars coupled with *bitpa'el* of אֱלֹהִים; in opposition to these two there are two promises, pr. 2 and pr. 10. With prs 6 and 7 goes pr. 3a in which again occurs the stars' comparison and the requital of Abraham's trust in God. To it there is linked pr. 12 through the double invocation *Jacob Jacob* parallel with *Abraham Abraham* (22, 1). In this group the name of God is generally ELOHIM who appears in visions of the night.

The rest of the promises, that is prs 1, 2, 5, are linked up with pr. 2 and pr. 10 where the comparison with the dust of the earth recurs together with the niphal of אֱלֹהִים; Pr. 3b belongs to the same tradition of pr. 1 because of the reference to Ur of the Chaldees; pr. 1 in its turn links up with pr. 2 in which Lot figures prominently as in pr. 1. Pr. 5 belongs also to the Lot cycle of narratives and pr. 8 goes with the group on account of the name of God *Yabweh*. In this group the name of God is regularly YAHWEH and He is pictured anthropomorphically.

Therefore we have three groups of promises representing three strands of tradition:

**Group A (prs 1, 2, 3a, 5, 8, 10).** In this group land comes first; it is described in various ways. Blessing is granted to the patriarchs to be mediated to the rest of the world to those who would be in friendly terms with the patriarchs. Posterity is promised next to land by means of the general expression לְנֶדְוֹי לְנֶדְוֹי וְלְנֶדְוֹי and it is compared to the dust of the earth and the sand on the sea-shore. Isaac is promised to Sarah, who was sceptical about such a promise. There is a covenant between God and Abraham.

**Group B (prs 3a, 6, 7, 12).** In this group we have also the same promises: *land, blessing and posterity*. The blessing is promised for the future and it is to be passed over to the other nations of the earth; the *bitpael* is used to express the transference of the blessing from the patriarchs to the other nations. Posterity comes next; it is compared with the stars of heaven. A son is promised to Abraham; but God does not reveal his name. For the covenant there is the oath of God.

**Group C (prs 4, 9, 11, 13).** Blessing is not promised to the patriarchs; it is already with them. It is the effective goodwill and graciousness of God towards the patriarchs. Posterity is the main object promised and hence it takes precedence over the possession of land. The land promised to them is the *land of their wanderings*. The covenant, signified by the circumcision, is put at the basis of the relations between the patriarchs and God. In this tradition there are set phrases which recur with constant regularity. A son is also promised to Abraham whose name would be Isaac.

An important fact emerges from this brief description, namely that the promises are evenly distributed among the patriarchs thus:

PATRIARCH	A	B	C
ABRAHAM	1, 2, 3b, 5	3a, 6	4
ISAAC	8	7	9 (to Jacob)
JACOB	10	12	11, 13

All the three traditions were interested in the history of the patriarchs or rather in the incidents of their lives which were centred on the Promise; in each of them the Promise is the strong moving force in the spiritual development of the patriarchs, who come to rely more and more on the power and love of God. In tradition A God is the familiar friend of Abraham with whom He dines and whom He is ever ready to help and encourage in any danger; in B God is more spiritualized, He contacts Abraham in

visions of the night or through His angel; in C God is the all-mighty one El Shaddai. In all of them, however, we note the absolute trust of the patriarchs in Him, although in A traces of misgivings are not absent, due perhaps to the human way in which God is pictured and to the attempt of the narrator to have strong literary effects by way of contrast. God is always willing to grant to the patriarchs what appears to be humanly impossible, such as the birth of Isaac when both Abraham and Sarah were extremely old.

Having established the existence of these three different groups of promises together with the narratives in which they are embedded, we could now proceed to apply the same principles to the rest of the narratives which, though they do not include any promise, are also connected with them.

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