

# The Sources of the Pentateuch, Their Literary Extent and the Bridge between Genesis and Exodus

A Survey of Scholarship since Astruc

*Konrad Schmid*

## A. The Transition from Genesis to Exodus and the Formation of the Pentateuch

The formation of the Pentateuch is an open problem which probably will never be solved completely<sup>1</sup> due to the lack of external data. A multitude of observations has led to different theories in the past two hundred years of critical scholarship<sup>2</sup> that compete in various respects. The common ground of current research is fairly modest: Today, it is generally acknowledged, firstly, that the Pentateuch is basically a product of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium B.C.E., secondly, that it has undergone literary growth over several centuries and thirdly, that it is composed out of sources and redactional additions.<sup>3</sup> If we allow a distinction between micro-exegesis and macro-exegesis, the theories for the former are probably more diverse than those for the latter. Nevertheless, even the global theories or models for the formation of the Pentateuch diverge significantly from each other.

A central question among current theories is how to interpret and date the literary transition between Genesis and Exodus.<sup>4</sup> In terms of the narrative organization of the Pentateuch, the literary boundary between Genesis and Exodus provides the most significant *caesura* within the Torah: It separates – to use John Van Seters' term<sup>5</sup> – the “Life of Moses” in Exodus–Deuteronomy, which basically covers the 120 years of Moses' lifetime, from

---

<sup>1</sup> The current state of the discussion is documented in GERTZ et al., *Formation*; see also CARR, ‘Changes’.

<sup>2</sup> SKA, *Introduction*; GERTZ, *Grundinformation*, 193–285.

<sup>3</sup> This is also true for recent redaction-critical approaches; see SCHMID, ‘European Scholarship’.

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., the discussion between BADEN, ‘Continuity’, and SCHMID, ‘Genesis and Exodus’; see also GERTZ, ‘Zusammenhang’.

<sup>5</sup> VAN SETERS, *Life*.

the primeval and ancestral history in Genesis (which Van Seters calls the “prologue to history”)<sup>6</sup> covering some 2500 years according to the biblical chronology. But did the earliest literary sources (which the Documentary Hypothesis designates as the Yahwistic and Elohist documents) already narrate the transition from the ancestors in Genesis to the Moses story in Exodus? Or did the basic layers of Genesis and Exodus have a significant literary history unto themselves before they were connected to each other?

The current discussion between “documentarians” or “neo-documentarians” on the one hand<sup>7</sup> and redaction-critical approaches to the formation of the Pentateuch on the other hand might sometimes be perceived as a “querelle des anciens et des modernes” within biblical scholarship. The “documentarians” or “neo-documentarians” claim to have the scholarly tradition of the 19<sup>th</sup> century on their side, especially Julius Wellhausen, whereas the others do not. A closer look into the history of scholarship, however, reveals that Wellhausen does not completely fit the exegetical approach of the “neo-documentarians” nor is the proposal of the literary separation of Genesis and Exodus an innovation of late 20<sup>th</sup>- or early 21<sup>st</sup>-century scholarship on the Pentateuch. As for the first point, one should mention Wellhausen’s polemic against what he called the “mechanische Mosaikhypothese” (“mechanistic mosaic hypothesis”)<sup>8</sup> which simply assigns different textual elements to the already presupposed sources J, E, D and P in the Pentateuch, a process which Wellhausen deemed to be “verrückt” (“crazy”).<sup>9</sup> In addition, Wellhausen advocated a complex notion of the sources of the Pentateuch:

For reasons of simplicity, in most cases I set aside the fact that the literary process was in actuality more complex and the so-called supplementary hypothesis can indeed be used in a subordinate way. J and E were probably edited and augmented several times (J<sup>1</sup> J<sup>2</sup> J<sup>3</sup>, E<sup>1</sup> E<sup>2</sup> E<sup>3</sup>), and they were combined not as J<sup>1</sup> and E<sup>1</sup>, but as J<sup>3</sup> and E<sup>3</sup>. A similar process took place for JE, Dt and Q before they were combined with the relevant units.

Der Einfachheit wegen abstrahire ich meistens davon, dass der literarische Process in Wirksamkeit compliciter gewesen ist und die sogenannte Ergänzungshypothese in untergeordneter Weise doch ihre Anwendung findet. J und E haben wol erst mehrere vermehrte Ausgaben (J<sup>1</sup> J<sup>2</sup> J<sup>3</sup>, E<sup>1</sup> E<sup>2</sup> E<sup>3</sup>) erlebt und sind nicht als J<sup>1</sup> und E<sup>1</sup>, sondern als J<sup>3</sup> und E<sup>3</sup> zusammengearbeitet. Ähnliches gilt von JE, Dt und Q, bevor sie mit den betreffenden grösseren Ganzen vereinigt wurden.<sup>10</sup>

Regarding the second point about the literary separation between Genesis and Exodus, it will be necessary to look into the history of research particularly before Wellhausen. It is well known that, after Wellhausen, Willy Staerk,

---

<sup>6</sup> VAN SETERS, *Prologue*.

<sup>7</sup> See STACKERT, *A Prophet Like Moses*, 1–35.

<sup>8</sup> WELLHAUSEN, *Briefe*, 78 (letter to Adolf Jülicher, 18 November 1880).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> WELLHAUSEN, *Composition*, 207.

Kurt Galling, Martin Noth, Rolf Rendtorff, Erhard Blum and others have adduced strong evidence for a non-original (literary) sequence of the narrative materials in Genesis and Exodus, but it is less known that such observations were also made before Wellhausen.<sup>11</sup>

The following considerations will be limited to the period of critical scholarship on the Pentateuch beginning with Astruc. They will show how the transition from Genesis to Exodus was perceived from the very beginnings of critical scholarship as an important literary realm for developing diachronic compositional theories.

## B. The Book of Genesis as a Model for the Pentateuch

Pentateuchal scholarship, particularly in its beginnings in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but also in its more recent phases, has been dominated by the analysis and evaluation of the book of Genesis.<sup>12</sup> What had been concluded for Genesis was also deemed to be true for the subsequent books of the Pentateuch, even if the textual evidence did not support such a transfer of concepts.<sup>13</sup> In fact, the extrapolation of the findings from the book of Genesis to the rest of the Pentateuch is one of the most serious flaws of pentateuchal scholarship from Astruc up to the 1970s and even still today.

Some presentations of the history of pentateuchal scholarship note this focus on the book of Genesis, along with a related neglect of the following

---

<sup>11</sup> To be sure, one can even go back to the biblical text itself and its earliest receptions to detect an awareness of a literary gap between Genesis and Exodus. For instance, the book divisions between Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers are merely of a technical nature: they interrupt an ongoing topic and seem basically to serve the purpose of highlighting Leviticus as the center of the Torah (see SCHMID, *Genesis and the Moses Story*, 23–29). Only Genesis and Deuteronomy are somewhat self-contained literary units (see BEN ZVI, ‘Closing Words’). Thus, already for a pre-critical perspective on the Pentateuch, it is obvious that Genesis is somewhat distinct from the following account of the “Life of Moses”. The same is true for the book of Jubilees, which recounts the narrative from Gen 1 to Exod 24 through the lens of the Mosaic law which, according to Jubilees, must have been already of some significance before its promulgation in the period of the exodus from Egypt (see, e.g., KUGEL, ‘Book of Jubilees’; IDEM, *Walk*; on late biblical and post-biblical receptions of the sequence Gen–Exod see also SCHMID, *Genesis and the Moses Story*, 282–333).

<sup>12</sup> Already NÖLDEKE lamented this fact, see his *Untersuchungen*, 5.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. the (in)famous statement of Noth in his commentary on Numbers: “If we were to take the book of Numbers on its own, then we would think not so much of ‘continuing sources’ as of an unsystematic collection of innumerable pieces of very varied content, age and character (‘Fragment Hypothesis’). [...] It is, therefore, justifiable to approach the book of Numbers with the results of pentateuchal analysis elsewhere and to expect the continuing pentateuchal ‘sources’ here, too, even if, as we have said, the situation in Numbers, of itself does not exactly lead us to these results” (NOTH, *Numbers*, 4–5).

books, while other presentations overlook the issue. An important example for the former approach is Otto Eissfeldt, who described the earliest period of scholarship starting with Astruc in his monumental *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* as follows:

The separation of the Pentateuch into parallel threads – since these are Astruc’s main sources – took its starting point from the analysis of Genesis, which is a purely narrative book. And this solution to the pentateuchal problem assuming two or three [...] parallel threads, which had been labeled as the Older Documentary Hypothesis, became prevalent as long as the perspective was limited to Genesis. As soon as the other books, which mainly deal with legal material, were included in the analysis, one began to question seriously the Documentary Hypothesis, as it was not possible to identify parallel threads in the laws, and one sought a solution in the [...] fragmentary hypothesis.

Die Zerlegung des Pentateuchs in Parallelfäden – denn das sind Astrucs Hauptquellen – hat ihren Ausgangspunkt von der Untersuchung der ein reines Erzählungsbuch darstellenden Genesis genommen und diese mit zwei oder drei [...] Parallelfäden rechnende Lösung des Pentateuchproblems, die man wohl als die ältere Urkundenhypothese bezeichnet hat, ist herrschend geblieben, so lange der Blick im wesentlichen auf die Genesis beschränkt blieb. Als auch die anderen, großenteils gesetzlichen Stoff enthaltenden Bücher mit in die Untersuchung einbezogen wurden, begann man an der Urkundenhypothese irre zu werden, weil man in den Gesetzen keine Parallelfäden erkennen konnte, und suchte nun die Lösung in der [...] Fragmentenhypothese.<sup>14</sup>

An apt illustration for the latter attitude can be found in the chapter on Johann G. Eichhorn in Hans-Joachim Kraus’ *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments*. On the one hand, Kraus acknowledges the limitation of Eichhorn’s observation on the book of Genesis:

Only after [...] Moses was presented as the creator of the Pentateuch did Eichhorn deal more closely with the sources of Genesis.

Erst nachdem [...] von Mose als dem Schöpfer des Pentateuchs die Rede gewesen ist, beschäftigt Eichhorn sich näher mit den Quellen der Genesis.<sup>15</sup>

On the other hand, he presents Eichhorn’s discussion of the sources of the book of Genesis as “analyses of the Pentateuch” (my emphasis) in the wake of Astruc, who himself had also dealt only with the book of Genesis (and the first two chapters of Exodus):

In his studies on the Pentateuch, Eichhorn endorsed Astruc’s discoveries and brought them to the full attention of Old Testament studies.

In seinen Untersuchungen zum Pentateuch hat Eichhorn den Entdeckungen Astrucs in der alttestamentlichen Wissenschaft volle Anerkennung verschafft.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> EISSFELDT, *Einleitung*, 213.

<sup>15</sup> KRAUS, *Geschichte*, 141.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

Kraus does not seem to be fully aware that applying the Documentary Hypothesis to the full Pentateuch depends on extrapolating from analyses of Genesis, nor does he observe that even Astruc himself did not seek to develop a source theory that was valid for the *Pentateuch as a whole*.<sup>17</sup>

### C. The Relationship between Genesis and Exodus from Astruc to Hupfeld

Jean Astruc (1684–1766),<sup>18</sup> a French physician in royal service, may qualify as one of the founders of critical scholarship on the Pentateuch, even though his critical impetus was still comparably modest. Against Spinoza, he wanted to defend the Mosaic origin of the Pentateuch on the one hand, but on the other hand, he was reluctant to credit Moses with all the doublets and contradictions in the text of the Pentateuch. For Astruc, Moses was the author of the Pentateuch from Exod 3 onwards, but obviously Moses could not have been an eyewitness to the events that happened before his birth. Astruc was therefore convinced that Moses had used different sources for composing the book of Genesis and the first two chapters of Exodus.

The criteria for the identification and separation of these sources were the changes between “Elohim” and “Jehovah” and the so-called “antichronisms”, i.e., difficulties in the biblical chronology. The sources identified by Astruc included two documents (labeled by him as A and B) that are still discernible as originally independent narratives. In addition, there were ten additional sources that Moses knew of and had used, but they do not add up to a continuous narrative thread. Moses had ordered these documents in four columns: Column A comprised the passages employing “Elohim” (Gen 1:1–2:3; 6:9–22; 7:6–10, 19, 22, 24; 8:1–19; 9:1–10, 12, 16, 17, 28, 29; 11:10–26; 17:3–27; 20:1–17; 21:2–32; 22:1–10; 23; 25:1–11; 30:1–23; 31:4–47; 31:51–32:2; 33:24–33:16; 35:1–27; 37; 40–48; 49:29–33; 50; Exod 1–2), column B included the texts speaking of “Jehovah” (Gen 2:4–4:26; 6:1–8; 7:1–5, 11–18, 21, 24; 8:1–19; 9:11, 13–15, 18–27, 28, 29; 10:9–11:9; 11:27–13:18; 15:1–17:2; 18:1–19:28; 20:18–21:1; 21:33–34; 22:11–19; 24; 25:19–26:33; 27:1–28:5; 28:10–22; 29; 30:24–43; 31:1–3, 48–50; 32:3–23; 33:17–20; 38; 39; 49:1–28; column C included material that even occurs a third time besides its attestation in A and B (Gen 7:20, 23, 24; 34<sup>19</sup>), and column D contained Gen 14; 19:29–38; 22:20–24; 25:12–18; 26:34–35; 28:6–9; 35:28–36:43.

<sup>17</sup> For a nuanced approach to the history of scholarship, see RÖMER, ‘Higher Criticism’.

<sup>18</sup> ASTRUC, *Conjectures*. The original work was published anonymously in Brussels in 1753. On Astruc see GERTZ, ‘Jean Astruc’.

<sup>19</sup> Astruc seems to be ambiguous on attributing Gen 34 to C or to D (cf. HOUTMAN, *Pentateuch*, 66).

These texts do not employ either “Elohim” or “Jehovah” and thus cannot be assigned to A or B, but they stem from various sources, possibly from Israel’s neighbors. A later redactor eventually combined Moses’ synopsis in what is now the Pentateuch.

Accordingly, even with the emergence of the Documentary Hypothesis in its earliest form (that of Astruc), the peculiar character of the book of Genesis was in some way recognized. More importantly, the division of the text of the Pentateuch into two sources only applied to Genesis, and it was only the “Elohim” source that was identified as extending into the book of Exodus. The Pentateuch from Exod 3 onwards was Moses’ creation from his memories.

Earlier than and independently from Astruc, Henning Bernhard Witter (1683–1715),<sup>20</sup> a pastor in Hildesheim, had proposed a source-critical solution for some texts of the Pentateuch, i.e., Gen 1–3, although he had planned to deal with the whole Pentateuch.<sup>21</sup> Since he passed away at the young age of 32, his work remained unfinished. As with Astruc, his proposal of two sources using different designations for God was limited to the book of Genesis. An extension of his source texts into Exodus was neither in view nor could it be extrapolated due to the limited scope of his investigation.

Johann David Michaelis (1717–1791) was one of the most prominent biblical scholars of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and had a major impact on his discipline.<sup>22</sup> In his *Einleitung in die göttlichen Schriften des Alten Bundes* (1787) he reviewed Astruc’s proposal at length but modified it for his own purposes. According to him, Astruc had overstated his case. In Michaelis’ view, it is impossible to discern continuous sources behind the Pentateuch, whose Mosaic authorship he did not doubt. But of course, Moses used and integrated traditional material in his writing. Notably, Michaelis suspected the “Jehovah” texts in particular of including older material because of their linguistic peculiarities:

In some other chapters dealing with the ancient history, particularly in those calling God Jehovah, some rare words – which Moses had in front of him, although he did not follow them that precisely [...] – seem to have been preserved and can still be recognized behind his usual style.

---

<sup>20</sup> His significance for the history of pentateuchal research had been redetected by LODS, ‘Henning Bernhard Witter’, 134–135. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, he was mostly forgotten mainly because of the massive critique of his contemporary, Johann Hermann von Elswich. See BARDTKE, ‘Henning Bernhard Witter’.

<sup>21</sup> His book *Jura Israelitarum* dealt with Gen 1:1–6:8; 6:9–11:32; and 12:1–17:27. He had finished his commentary on the rest of Genesis in handwritten form, but this part has never been published (HOUTMAN, *Pentateuch*, 62).

<sup>22</sup> See LEGASPI, *Death*, 79–154.

Auch in einigen anderen von der alten Geschichte handelnden Capiteln, sonderlich in welchen Gott, Jehova, genannt wird, scheinen gewisse seltene Wörter, welche Moses vor sich hatte, ob er ihnen gleich nicht so genau folgte, [...] übrig geblieben zu seyn und durch seine sonst kenntliche Schreibart durchzuleuchten.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, Michaelis cannot be deemed to be an early proponent of continuous sources in the Pentateuch bridging the books of Genesis and Exodus.

Astruc's book was not only important for Michaelis' *Einleitung*. It became particularly influential because of its reception in Johann Gottfried Eichhorn's (1752–1852) seminal *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (1780–1783). Eichhorn followed Astruc quite closely in distinguishing between the “Elohim” and the “Jehovah” source as the main components of Genesis. In his chart on source criticism, he also included a third column with texts that cannot be assigned to one of the main sources. In addition to Astruc, Eichhorn also points out some specifics of the two sources regarding style and content. Like Astruc, Eichhorn identified Moses or a similar person shortly after him as responsible for the composition of Genesis:

The name of the compiler is not important at all. The trustworthiness and the employability of our Genesis does not depend upon his name, but upon his diligence and precision in compiling.

Ueberhaupt aber kann uns der Name des Zusammenordners gleichgültig seyn. Nicht auf seinem Namen, sondern auf seiner Treue und Gewissenhaftigkeit im Zusammenordnen beruht die Glaubwürdigkeit und Brauchbarkeit unserer Genesis.<sup>24</sup>

Following Astruc, Eichhorn concluded that the “Elohim” document in Genesis continues into the first two chapters of Exodus. The “Jehovah” document is limited to Genesis. No source division can be found in Eichhorn's *Einleitung* regarding the rest of the Pentateuch: It was composed by someone who could not have lived after Moses.<sup>25</sup> Eichhorn opts for Moses and some of his contemporaries. The final shape of the Pentateuch was achieved sometime between Joshua and Samuel.<sup>26</sup>

Remarkably, Eichhorn defended his findings regarding the two sources underlying the book of Genesis against the objection that Genesis is only one part of the Pentateuch:

Can this proposed explanation of the origin of Genesis be termed as one-sided, just because it is not applicable to the other books of the O.T.?

Kann die aufgestellte Erklärung des Ursprungs der Genesis einseitig heißen, weil sie nicht auch auf die übrigen Bücher des A.T. anwendbar ist?<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> MICHAELIS, *Einleitung*, 275.

<sup>24</sup> EICHHORN, *Einleitung* III, 94.

<sup>25</sup> EICHHORN, *Einleitung* III, 195ff.

<sup>26</sup> EICHHORN, *Einleitung* III, 334ff., 350ff.

<sup>27</sup> EICHHORN, *Einleitung* III, 138.

This argument, of course, highlights once again the specific situation of Genesis within the Pentateuch and vividly demonstrates how Genesis-centered early critical scholarship on the Pentateuch was.

Karl David Ilgen (1763–1834)<sup>28</sup> took up the initial observations and evaluations on the book of Genesis by Astruc and Eichhorn, but he pressed the model further towards the assumption of two Elohist documents (“Sopher Eliel Harischon” and “Sopher Eliel Hascheni”) and one Jehovistic document (“Sopher Elijah Harischon”).<sup>29</sup>

After a careful analysis of the text of Genesis [...] it has become clear that the sources which the compiler had in front of him belong to three different authors, two of which employ the name Elohim for God and the third employs Jehovah. Those using the name Elohim, that is, the Elohist, I call Sopher Eliel (God is my God) to mark that they characterize themselves by using the name Elohim. The third one, using the name Jehovah, that is the Jehovist, I call Sopher Elijah (my God is Jah or Jehovah), because the pieces attributed to him are marked by Jehovah. To distinguish them one from another I am giving to the first Eliel the surname Harischon (the first), and to the other the surname Hascheni (the second). Elijah also has such a surname. It could appear superfluous with him, as he is alone and has no need to distinguish himself from anyone else. Nevertheless, it is possible that he does not remain the only one in the future and that there will be another Elijah, and with him, a mark of difference will be necessary. Therefore, for the time being, he may carry his surname, even if it is not yet obvious to what end. As for the age of the authors, I must refrain from discussing it. Without analyzing the following books of Moses, no proofs in the completeness I wish to provide regarding these books can be given as for the time in which these three authors have lived to which the pieces are attributed. It is, however, not necessary for evaluating the correctness of the source division to know in which era these three authors have lived, to which the pieces are attributed.

Nach einer sorgfältigen Untersuchung des Textes der Genesis [...] hat sich gefunden, daß die Urkunden, die der Sammler vor sich hatte, und zusammen stellte, drey verschiedenen Verfassern angehören, davon zwey von Gott den Nahmen Elohim und der dritte den Nahmen Jehovah gebrauchten. Ich nenne diejenigen, die den Nahmen Elohim gebrauchten, oder die Elohisten, Sopher Eliel (Gott ist mein Gott), um zu bemerken, daß sie sich durch den Gebrauch des Namens Elohim charakterisiren, den dritten aber, der den Nahmen Jehovah gebrauchte, oder den Jehovisten, nenne ich Sopher Elijah (mein Gott ist Jah oder Jehovah), weil die ihm angehörigen Stücke sich durch Jehovah auszeichnen; um sie aber wieder von einander selbst zu unterscheiden, so gebe ich dem einen Eliel noch den Beynahmen Harischon (der erste), und dem anderen den Beynahmen Haschscheni (der zweyte). Eben diesen Beynahmen hat auch Elijah. Es könnte zwar bey diesem überflüssig scheinen, da er nur einzig ist, und folglich sich von keinem anderen zu unterscheiden braucht; es ist aber möglich, daß er in der Zukunft nicht der einzige bleibt, und daß noch ein anderer Elijah auftritt, wo alsdenn ein Unterscheidungszeichen nöthig wird; daher mag er immer vor der Hand seinen Beynahmen führen, wenn der Nutzen davon auch noch nicht einleuchten sollte. Auf das Alter der Verfasser kann ich mich jetzt nicht einlassen, weil ohne die Bearbeitung der folgenden Bücher von Moses vor Augen zu haben, die Beweise nach der Voll-

---

<sup>28</sup> On Ilgen see SEIDEL, *Karl David Ilgen*.

<sup>29</sup> ILGEN, *Urkunden*, 426.



ständigkeit, die ich ihnen zu geben wünschte, sich nicht führen lassen; es ist auch zur Beurtheilung der Rechtlichkeit der Trennung nicht unumgänglich zu wissen, in welchem Zeitalter diese drei Verfasser, an welche die Stücke verteilt werden, gelebt haben [...].<sup>30</sup>

Interestingly, according to Ilgen, the three sources – that of Eliel Harischon, Eliel Hascheni and Elijah Harischon – are all composite documents. Eliel Harischon is a conglomerate of ten documents, Eliel Hascheni of five and Elijah Harischon of two.<sup>31</sup>

Unfortunately, Ilgen never discusses a possible continuation of the sources into the book of Exodus in his reconstruction of the book of Genesis; he simply ends his analyses with Gen 50.

In 1802–1805, Johann Severin Vater (1771–1826) published an extensive commentary on the Pentateuch<sup>32</sup> in which he reproduced the analyses and results of Alexander Geddes' (1737–1802) research on the Pentateuch, who proposed that the Pentateuch was composed out of many fragments that do not form continuous sources.<sup>33</sup> Of course, Vater also had to engage with the early documentary approaches to the Pentateuch by Astruc, Eichhorn and Ilgen. Vater dealt with these scholars at the very end of his commentary,<sup>34</sup> and he was fully aware that they only had discussed the book of Genesis.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, the heading of that final section of his commentary is “Fünfter Abschnitt: Prüfung einiger anderer Meinungen über die Entstehung des Pentateuchs und seiner Theile” (“Fifth part: evaluation of some other opinions regarding the formation of the Pentateuch and of its parts”). Vater seems to assume that rejecting Astruc's, Eichhorn's and Ilgen's notion of a “YHWH” and an “Elohim” document is valid for the entire Pentateuch, even though they had only dealt with Genesis.

Wilhelm Martin Leberecht de Wette (1780–1849) is especially known for his 1805 dissertation on Deuteronomy and its link to the Josianic reform. This work was of groundbreaking significance, although its basic hypothesis was not entirely new.<sup>36</sup> De Wette was a prolific writer, and his books often saw different editions in which he often changed and updated his positions. It is therefore not always easy to identify de Wette's position on a specific subject.

---

<sup>30</sup> ILGEN, *Urkunden*, 425–426.

<sup>31</sup> ILGEN, *Urkunden*, 494, see also 498.

<sup>32</sup> VATER, *Commentar*.

<sup>33</sup> On Geddes cf. FULLER, *Alexander Geddes*.

<sup>34</sup> VATER, *Commentar* III, 682–728.

<sup>35</sup> VATER, *Commentar* III, 696–728.

<sup>36</sup> See MATHYS, ‘de Wettes “Dissertatio critico-exegetica”’, 174–181.

In de Wette's introduction,<sup>37</sup> he held that only the Elohim texts run through the entire Pentateuch, while the "Jehovistic" parts do not add up to a literary whole:

Out of the different hypotheses that were built upon this phenomenon [i.e., the change between the divine names Elohim and Jehovah], the one which assumes two or more continuous documents encompassing the whole (Astruc, Eichhorn, Ilgen, Gramberg) is untenable, and the other one, only assuming fragments of different authors, is significantly flawed by the fact that the Elohistical pieces form a nearly perfectly reconstructable whole, whereas the Jehovistic ones do not add up.

Von den verschiedenen Hypothesen, welche man auf diese Erscheinung [sc. den Wechsel der "Gottesnamen Elohim und Jehova"] gebaut hat, fällt die, welche zwei oder mehrere durchgehende, das Ganze umfassende Urkunden annimmt (Astruc, Eichhorn, Ilgen, Gramberg,[sic]) ganz zusammen, und die andere, welche nur Fragmente verschiedener Verfasser annimmt, wird wenigstens sehr beschränkt durch die [...] Thatsache, dass die elohistischen Bestandteile ein fast ganz herstellbares Ganzes bilden, die jehovistischen hingegen sich nicht zusammenreihen lassen.<sup>38</sup>

In other words, according to de Wette's position here, only the material belonging to the literary strand later designed as "P" forms a continuous narrative. But even here he maintains regarding the transition from Genesis to Exodus: "Welch ungeheure Lücke ist dies!" ("What an incredible gap is this!").<sup>39</sup>

Hermann Hupfeld<sup>40</sup> (1796–1866) was responsible for developing the traditional two-source theory into a three-source theory: He found that the "Elohim" materials in the book of Genesis had to be distributed between a more

---

<sup>37</sup> On de Wette see MATHYS/SEYBOLD, *Wilhelm Martin Leberecht de Wette*, and especially SMEND, 'Theologe'.

<sup>38</sup> DE WETTE, *Lehrbuch*, 191 (see also 195). His "Urschrift", employing "Elohim", extends at least into the Sinai pericope. See already his *Kritik der Mosaischen Geschichte*, Halle 1807 (published as part 1 of *Kritik der Israelitischen Geschichte* in his *Beiträge zur Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, Halle 1807) where he basically adopts the "Fragmentenhypothese": "Was nun unsern Pentateuch betrifft, so können wir [...] als ausgemacht und anerkannt annehmen, daß die Bücher Mose eine Sammlung einzelner, ursprünglich unter sich unabhängiger Aufsätze verschiedener Verfasser sind" (21; "Regarding our Pentateuch, we can assume as safe and accepted that the books of Moses are a collection of formerly independent articles of different authors."). See also his polemics against Eichhorn and Ilgen on p. 29. De Wette's main focus is, however, not on the literary question of the Pentateuch, but on its historical reliability, which he completely denies. According to him, the Pentateuch is a collection of "myths" ("Mythen"; 396–397) that are not earlier than David. His argument is remarkable: "Mit David scheint erst diejenige Cultur zu beginnen, welche die schriftstellerischen Reste, die uns im Pentateuch aufbehalten sind, voraussetzen" (23; "Starting with David, the cultural environment seems to begin which is presupposed by the written remains that are preserved for us in the Pentateuch").

<sup>39</sup> DE WETTE, *Kritik*, 169.

<sup>40</sup> On Hupfeld see KAISER, *Hermann Hupfeld*.

prominent, earlier “Elohim” document and a more recent one. In addition, there was the traditional “Yhwhistic” (“Jhvhistisch” [sic]) strand in Genesis which Hupfeld, against his predecessors, interpreted as a stand-alone source, and not as a supplement. Like nearly all his precursors, he only dealt with the book of Genesis, which he also clearly indicated in the title of his main book: *Die Quellen der Genesis und die Art ihrer Zusammensetzung*.<sup>41</sup> Yet he was convinced that the older “Elohim” document – the so-called “Urschrift” – was not limited to Genesis alone, but continued into the following books of the Hexateuch, ending with the conquest of the land in Joshua. However, Hupfeld only specified the textual portions in Exodus that he attributed to the “Urschrift” beyond Genesis.<sup>42</sup> After its last statement in Gen 50:22, the “Urschrift” continues as follows: Exod 1:1–7; 2:23–25; 6:2–9; 12:40, 41, 51; 12:37; 13:20; 15:22, 23a, 27; 16:1; 17:1; 19:1, 2; 20:1–17; 21:1–23:19; 24:3–8; Exod 25–31 + 35–40, the wandering in the wilderness and the conquest of the land are just mentioned as themes that eventually follow in the “Urschrift’s” narrative thread. In terms of its genre, Hupfeld identified the “Urschrift” as Israel’s “national epic” (“Nationalepos”). Notably, Hupfeld found a prominent and continuous thread within the “Yhwhistic” material only from the Eden story to Jacob’s return to the land in Gen 33:17:

Looking back to the results of the inquiry so far, a continuous thread of Yhwhistic historical narrative from the beginning of things to the [...] point of Jacob’s return to holy soil in [Gen] 33:17 has appeared [...]. Its thread continues with equal character and steady plan.

Ueberblicken wir nun die Ergebnisse der bisherigen Erörterung, so hat sich [...] im ganzen ein fortlaufender Zusammenhang Jhvhistischer Geschichtserzählung vom Anfang der Dinge an bis zu dem [...] Punct der Rückkehr Jakobs auf den heiligen Boden [Gen] 33,17 gezeigt, dessen Faden mitten unter den Berichten aus älteren Quellen mit gleichmäßigem Charakter und stetem Plan fortläuft.<sup>43</sup>

Hupfeld, too, only identified a continuous thread from Genesis into Exodus on the level of the “Elohim” material but not in the “Yhwhistic” texts. Of course, this did not entail any larger consequences, since Hupfeld held the “Elohistic” texts to be older than their “Yhwhistic” counterparts, but the literary findings and their description by Hupfeld are still remarkable considering the present discussions.

---

<sup>41</sup> HUPFELD, *Quellen*.

<sup>42</sup> HUPFELD, *Quellen*, 37.

<sup>43</sup> HUPFELD, *Quellen*, 162.

## D. Graf, Bleek, Kuenen and Wellhausen

Karl Heinrich Graf (1815–1869) is one of the pioneers of the late dating of the Priestly legal material. Graf's main work<sup>44</sup> deals with the historical location of the "Priestergesetzgebung", i.e., the priestly laws, which he separated<sup>45</sup> from the narrative material, identifying the latter as the "Urschrift" or "[das] alte[] Geschichtsbuch[] des Elohisten" ("the old history book of the Elohist").<sup>46</sup> Against his predecessors, Graf argued for an exilic dating of these laws, which with Kuenen and Wellhausen then became the mainstream position in biblical scholarship.<sup>47</sup> Yet he maintained an early (i.e., early monarchic) dating for the "Urschrift". As for the Jehovistic material, Graf adhered to a supplementary hypothesis: The Jehovistic texts were attached to the early "Urschrift".<sup>48</sup> Regarding the character of the Jehovistic text, he explicitly followed Friedrich Bleek (1793–1859),<sup>49</sup> who held that both the "Elohistic" base document and the Jehovistic supplements covered both the book of Genesis and the continuation of the narrative up to the conquest of the land:<sup>50</sup>

Already results from the previous considerations show that the Elohist writing covered the history at least from creation to the revelation to Moses. Therefore, we can suspect that the author of our Genesis, who made it [i.e., the Elohist writing] the main basis of his work, did not break it off at the end of the book, at the death of Jacob and Joseph.

Da schon aus dem Bisherigen sich ergibt, dass in der elohistischen Schrift die Geschichte zum wenigsten von der Schöpfung an bis zu der dem Moses zu Theil gewordenen Offenbarung erstreckt hat, so könnten wir vermuthen, dass auch der Verfasser unserer Genesis, der sie zur Hauptgrundlage seines Werkes gemacht hat, dasselbe nicht mit dem Schlusse dieses Buches, beim Tode des Jakob und Joseph, wird abgebrochen haben.<sup>51</sup>

For Abraham Kuenen (1828–1891),<sup>52</sup> it was obvious that "P" continues from Genesis into Exodus and the following books of the Hexateuch.<sup>53</sup> For "JE", or

---

<sup>44</sup> GRAF, *Bücher*. On Graf see CONRAD, *Graf's Arbeit am Alten Testament*.

<sup>45</sup> Wellhausen criticized Graf sharply for this separation, which he called the "Achilles' heel" of his theory, see WELLHAUSEN in BLEEK, *Einleitung* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.), 159.

<sup>46</sup> GRAF, *Bücher*, 3.

<sup>47</sup> The question of who was the first to assign a late – i.e., at least exilic – date to the "Grundschrift" of the Pentateuch, later called "P", was not clear even to Julius Wellhausen: He credited Graf with that hypothesis, but at the same time explains that Leopold George and Wilhelm Vatke as well as Reuss are important forerunners to Graf (WELLHAUSEN, *Prolegomena*, 4).

<sup>48</sup> GRAF, *Bücher*, 111–112.

<sup>49</sup> BLEEK, *Einleitung* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), 252, 275.

<sup>50</sup> REUSS, *Geschichte*, 70–76, discusses and presents his own position, though it is important in terms of the history of scholarship only in a summarizing and retrospective way. On Reuss see VINCENT, *Leben und Werk*.

<sup>51</sup> BLEEK, *Einleitung* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), 261.

<sup>52</sup> See SMEND, 'Work'.

as he called them, the “prophetische[] Bestandteile des Hexateuch (JE)”,<sup>54</sup> he was less convinced, but his answer was still positive:

It is probable *a priori* that neither E nor J would confine himself to the patriarchal period. Both alike would have something to say of the release of Israel from Egypt and the settlement of the tribes in Canaan. And as a fact in *Exodus*, *Numbers* and *Joshua* we here and there detect just such a parallelism between E and J as we have seen in *Genesis*. But here it is sporadic, and by no means so clear as in *Genesis*.<sup>55</sup>

Es ist *a priori* wahrscheinlich, dass E sowohl wie J sich nicht auf die Patriarchenzeit beschränkt, sondern auch die Befreiung Israels aus Ägypten und die Ansiedlung der Stämme in Kanaan geschildert haben. In der That zeigt sich ein ähnlicher Parallelismus von E und J, wie wir ihn in der *Genesis* beobachten, auch hier und da in den Büchern *Exodus*, *Numeri* und *Josua*. Aber eben auch nur hier und da, und bei weitem nicht so deutlich wie in der *Genesis*.<sup>56</sup>

In a subsequent footnote, Kuenen names the main textual observations that led him to believe why J and E continue into the book of *Exodus*:

Texts such as *Gen.* xlvi. 1–5; xlviii. 8–22; l. 24, 25 (E) and *Gen.* xii. 7; xxiv. 7; xxvii. 28, 29 (J) make it as good as certain that in both documents the narratives about the patriarchs formed an introduction to the history of the exodus and the settlement in Canaan. We are therefore justified, on every ground, in looking for the continuation of both in *Exodus-Joshua*.<sup>57</sup>

Stellen wie G[en] XLVI, 1–5; XLVIII, 8–22; L, 24, 25 (E) und G[en] XII, 7; XXIV, 7; XXVII, 28, 29 (J) machen es so gut wie gewiss, dass in beiden Urkunden die Ueberlieferungen über die Erzväter die Einleitung für die Geschichte des Auszugs und die Ansiedlung in Kanaan bildeten. Wir sind jedenfalls berechtigt, die Fortsetzung der beiden Traditionen in den Büchern *Exod.–Jos.* zu suchen.<sup>58</sup>

Even if it is not clear whether, in the framework of the Documentary Hypothesis, these passages are all J and E or if they contain clear ties to the books following *Genesis*, it is nevertheless noteworthy that Kuenen identified and addressed the problem of whether J and E extend beyond the book of *Genesis*.

Given the scholarly discussion on the composition of the Pentateuch in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century, it is rather surprising that Julius Wellhausen (1844–1919)<sup>59</sup> did not dedicate much thought to the question of whether the

---

<sup>53</sup> KUENEN, *Einleitung*, 80. Kuenen favors an ending of P in the book of *Joshua* (99), although he is not able to identify a specific text in this regard.

<sup>54</sup> KUENEN, *Einleitung*, 133.

<sup>55</sup> KUENEN, *Inquiry*, 140–141.

<sup>56</sup> KUENEN, *Einleitung*, 135.

<sup>57</sup> KUENEN, *Inquiry*, 149 n. 9.

<sup>58</sup> KUENEN, *Einleitung*, 143 n. 9.

<sup>59</sup> See SMEND, *Julius Wellhausen*.

sources of the Pentateuch extend beyond the book of Genesis into the other books of the Pentateuch (or, as he held, the Hexateuch). He stated:

It is evident that Q and JE continue beyond Genesis into the book of Joshua.

Dass Q und JE sich über die Genesis hinaus, bis in das Buch Josua fortsetzen, ist eine ausgemachte Sache.<sup>60</sup>

Apparently, Wellhausen followed Bleek in this regard, whose *Einleitung* he reworked and edited in 1878.<sup>61</sup> A specific argument for the hexateuchal extension of “JE” resulted from Wellhausen’s reversal of the historical order of “Q” and “JE”: If “Q” covers the entire Hexateuch and is later than “JE”, but apparently presupposes “JE” and supplements its text, then “JE” must also have extended into the book of Joshua:

Already in 1861 I was convinced that the so-called Elohist or the author of the base document is often not the supplemented one, but the supplementing one.

Schon 1861 war es meine Überzeugung, dass der s.g. Elohist oder Autor der Grundschrift oft nicht der Ergänzte, sondern der Ergänzer ist [...].<sup>62</sup>

Wellhausen thus produced rather than relied on a consensus that had partially emerged in the wake of previous scholarship, which held that the literary findings in the book of Genesis and their interpretation could be extrapolated to the rest of the Pentateuch as well, even if Ilgen, Hupfeld and others had explicitly and deliberately dealt only with the book of Genesis.

Nevertheless, the overall extension of the sources from Genesis to Exodus was a very important element of Wellhausen’s pentateuchal theory. In his discussion of the Joseph story, he therefore stressed the importance of J and E as narratives including literary bridges between Genesis and Exodus:

It is to be assumed that this work [i.e., the book of Genesis] here [i.e., in Gen 37–50] as elsewhere is composed out of J and E. Our earlier results suggest this assumption and they would be flawed if it could not be proven.

Es ist zu vermuten, dass dies Werk [sc. die Gen] hier [sc. in Gen 37–50] wie sonst aus J und E zusammengesetzt sei; unsere früheren Ergebnisse drängen auf diese Annahme und würden erschüttert werden, wäre sie nicht erweisbar.<sup>63</sup>

Indeed, if J and E were not present in Gen 37–50, a literary bridge between Genesis and Exodus would be absent in these documents, and they would thus break into two pieces, one covering Genesis, the other covering the Exodus story. Therefore, Wellhausen gave heed to his assumption to find J and E

---

<sup>60</sup> WELLHAUSEN, *Composition*, 61.

<sup>61</sup> Most helpful is Wellhausen’s own account of the history of pentateuchal criticism in BLEEK, *Einleitung* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.), 152–178 (“Übersicht über den Fortgang der Pentateuchkritik seit Bleeks Tod”).

<sup>62</sup> WELLHAUSEN, in BLEEK, *Einleitung* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.), 157.

<sup>63</sup> WELLHAUSEN, *Composition*, 52.

also in the Joseph story, although he did not really manage to reach a clear-cut source division of the text.

It might have to do with Wellhausen's authority in the discipline that his conviction regarding the continuous nature of the pentateuchal or hexateuchal sources became so well established, despite the fact that he could neither rely on a fully-developed proof in previous scholarship nor formulate such a proof himself.

## E. From Galling to Rendtorff and Beyond

Nevertheless, the rather unstable consensus about continuous, pentateuchal sources in the wake of Wellhausen did not go unchallenged. Doubts about an organic connection between the ancestors and Exodus arose anew in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>64</sup> In his 1928 Habilitationsschrift, Kurt Galling (1900–1987) argued that the narrative complexes of the ancestors and Moses represent two originally independent “traditions of the election” of Israel that did not always follow each other.<sup>65</sup> A year later, in his study “The God of the Fathers,” Albrecht Alt (1883–1956) expressed a similar view but explained the independence of the ancestral story in a somewhat different way. For Alt, the “explanation of the idea of election in the ancestral story and its tension with the Moses tradition”<sup>66</sup> has its roots in the pre-literary incorporation of the oral concept of the “god of the fathers” into the ancestral story.

A highly influential work for pentateuchal scholarship was Martin Noth's (1902–1968) *Überlieferungsgeschichte des Pentateuch* from 1948. Noth explicitly took up Galling's observations but also criticized them.<sup>67</sup> On the one hand, Noth held with Galling that the ancestral theme and the Exodus theme, among others, were originally independent tradition complexes. In fact, he clearly highlighted their differences and self-contained character:

Among the great themes, the content and location of the ‘ancestor’ theme is self-contained and isolated. It thus hardly came to be firmly fixed to the affiliated themes.<sup>68</sup> – Since [...] the theme of the ancestor story, as Galling has already correctly seen, was subsequently

---

<sup>64</sup> For a more detailed discussion see SCHMID, *Genesis and the Moses Story*, 7–13.

<sup>65</sup> GALLING, *Erwählungstraditionen*.

<sup>66</sup> ALT, ‘Der Gott der Väter’, 62–63.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. the reference in NOTH, *Überlieferungsgeschichte des Pentateuch*, 49 n. 154. According to Noth, Galling erred “in that he traced the construction of the ancestral story in the Pentateuch's transmission to a single *literary act*” (ibid.). This critique is surprising precisely because, according to Noth, the ancestral story had been connected to the rest of the Pentateuch only in “the traditio-historically late passage of Gen 15” (ibid., 218).

<sup>68</sup> NOTH, *Überlieferungsgeschichte des Pentateuch*, 216.

placed before the following themes we must seek the starting point of the whole within the transmission complex presented to us as the Moses story.<sup>69</sup>

Thus, for Noth, the exodus tradition is the most important and most foundational theme of the Pentateuch.<sup>70</sup> “The ‘leading out of Egypt’ is the [...] *foundational confession of Israel* and simultaneously the *nucleus of the entire grand, later Pentateuch transmission*.”<sup>71</sup> Against Galling, Noth dismissed the idea that the ancestral story and the subsequent exodus tradition were originally *literarily* independent units. Rather, he proposed that these two themes were already combined in the foundational work that he called “G”, which was known to “J” and “E”.<sup>72</sup> The reason for this decision was that Noth accepted von Rad’s early dating of the “small historical credo”.<sup>73</sup> For von Rad, the credo formulations and their underlying concept of Israel’s salvation history in Deut 26:5–9; Josh 24:2–13; and 1 Sam 12:8–9<sup>74</sup> were “given from the oldest times.”<sup>75</sup> As a result, the idea of the salvation-historical outline of the Hexateuch was held to be just as old. The creator of the first large presentation of history from creation to the possession of the land in Israel, the author of “J” in the time of Solomon, only had to adopt it. Von Rad thus placed the dichotomy between the ancestors and the exodus in the very early realm of the oral tradition, and even the pre-Yahwistic history of the Pentateuch. He considered their connection as the work of the oldest pentateuchal stratum (“J”). An important stream of scholarship has followed him to this day despite the widely recognized critique of the early dating of the “small historical credo.”<sup>76</sup> Thus, in current scholarship, it is still a widely held assumption that

---

<sup>69</sup> NOTH, *Überlieferungsgeschichte des Pentateuch*, 48–49.

<sup>70</sup> NOTH, *Überlieferungsgeschichte des Pentateuch*, 50. Noth therefore also treats the theme of “the leading out of Egypt” (50–54) at the beginning of the “main themes of the transmission of the Pentateuch” (48–50), while the “promise to the ancestors” would only be addressed later (58–62).

<sup>71</sup> NOTH, *Überlieferungsgeschichte des Pentateuch*, 52; cf. 54: “The narrative of the leading out of Egypt forms the crystallizing core of the entire grand pentateuchal narrative.”

<sup>72</sup> See NOTH, *Überlieferungsgeschichte des Pentateuch*, 40–43. Noth did not decide whether “G” was an oral or written entity.

<sup>73</sup> VON RAD, ‘Problem’, 3–4, 8–9; Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichte des Pentateuch*, 2–3, 51. An additional reason why Noth thought that the conceptual connection of the ancestors and the exodus was older than the oldest fixed written form (NOTH, *Überlieferungsgeschichte des Pentateuch*, 49 n. 154) lay in the idea that he considered the “overall Israelite orientation of the Pentateuch tradition” as its “foundational inventory” (45).

<sup>74</sup> See VON RAD, ‘Problem’, 54–57.

<sup>75</sup> VON RAD, ‘Problem’, 4.

<sup>76</sup> It is widely recognized that the so-called small historical credo of Deut 26:5–9 cannot be an ancient piece of tradition that is “in form and content very much older than the literary context in which it is currently situated” (VON RAD, ‘Problem’, 12: “nach Form und Inhalt sehr viel älter ist als der literarische Zusammenhang, in dem es jetzt eingeordnet ist”);



the basic literary compositional layer (“J”) in Genesis is to be identified with the corresponding one in Exodus (and the following books of the Pentateuch or Hexateuch).

The Documentary Hypothesis as presented by Gerhard von Rad and Martin Noth has proven to be one of the most successful hypotheses in the biblical disciplines. Within this general scholarly setting, the fundamental difference between the ancestral narratives and the exodus story only appeared when scholars distanced themselves from the traditional source theory. In 1965, the Canadian scholar Frederick V. Winnett<sup>77</sup> stated in a widely read essay that neither “early J” nor “late J”, two main stages in the development of “J” according to him, extended beyond Genesis. He argued that “P” was the first to combine “late J”, extending from creation to Joseph, with the independent Moses narrative.<sup>78</sup>

Winnett’s student John Van Seters also separated the traditions of the ancestors and exodus, dating “J” to the exilic period.<sup>79</sup> However, for Van Seters, it is this exilic “J” that joined the ancestors and exodus.<sup>80</sup> As a very extended preface to the Deuteronomistic History, the literary extent of “J” reached from Gen 2 to Josh 24, which “J” composed as the endpoint.

Rolf Rendtorff’s work, *Das überlieferungsgeschichtliche Problem des Pentateuch*, appearing in 1977,<sup>81</sup> represents the most important break in relation to the dominant acceptance of a horizontal incision (i.e., parallel narrative threads) instead of a vertical incision (i.e., discrete blocks of tradition) in the literary development of the Pentateuch. In this book, Rendtorff advocated the *literary* division of the various transmission complexes (“larger units”) of the Pentateuch, which in a certain sense was a redaction-historical transformation of the transmission-historical observations of Noth.<sup>82</sup> In so doing, Rendtorff called the literary unity of “J” into question. In the mid-seventies, Van Seters,<sup>83</sup> Hans Heinrich Schmid,<sup>84</sup> and Hermann Vorländer<sup>85</sup> cast doubt

but cf. his own relativizing statement in VON RAD, *Genesis* (9th ed.), 3. See also the studies of Rost, Lohfink and Richter discussed in RADJAWANE, ‘Das deuteronomistische Geschichtswerk’, esp. 205–206; more recently see GERTZ, ‘Stellung’.

<sup>77</sup> WINNETT, ‘Re-Examining the Foundations’, 1–19.

<sup>78</sup> On the independent Moses narrative see WINNETT, *Mosaic Tradition*.

<sup>79</sup> See VAN SETERS, ‘Confessional Reformulation’; IDEM, *Prologue*, 233, 242–243; IDEM, *Yahwist*.

<sup>80</sup> See VAN SETERS, *Prologue*, 242–243.

<sup>81</sup> RENDTORFF, *Problem*. See also Rainer Kessler’s 1972 dissertation, published in 2015 (KESSLER, *Querverweise*). Though it showed little synthetic power, it proceeded not from the traditional Documentary Hypothesis, but from the explicit cross-references between the larger thematic units in the pre-Priestly Pentateuch. Likewise, the basic lines of Blum’s model of the composition of the Pentateuch are already foreshadowed.

<sup>82</sup> RENDTORFF, *Problem*, 19–28, 147–173.

<sup>83</sup> VAN SETERS, *Abraham*.

<sup>84</sup> SCHMID, *Jahwist*.

on the standard early dating of “J” to the time of Solomon. While they did this, Rendtorff fundamentally objected to identifying “J” as a comprehensive source layer at all. Instead, he regarded the pre-Priestly Pentateuch as having been compiled from “larger units”, in the vein of Noth’s “major themes” of the Pentateuch, that were only loosely combined redactionally.

In a short essay from 1975, Rendtorff presented the idea that the Priestly Writing, conceived as redaction, was the first one to bring together literarily the various “larger units” in the Pentateuch into a single sequence of events.<sup>86</sup> In his work from 1977, he limited the extent of “P” to Gen 1–Exod 6, so that “P” covers the primeval history, the ancestral narratives and the exodus story, but not the entire Pentateuch.<sup>87</sup> The first combination of all of the larger units in the Pentateuch was achieved by a “Deuteronomistic” editorial layer.<sup>88</sup> It is not clear in his 1977 monograph whether the “P” texts are earlier or later than this “D” editing. Thus, Rendtorff also received contradictory reviews. Rendtorff was apparently not willing to take a firm stance on this problem. In 1983, he wrote: The “relationship” of the “Priestly editorial layer” “to the Deuteronomistic editing” is “largely unexplained.”<sup>89</sup>

In the meantime, Rendtorff’s basic approach was propounded by Erhard Blum, who argued for the independence of especially the ancestral history into the exilic period.<sup>90</sup> The connection of the ancestors and the exodus, according to Blum in his studies from 1984 and 1990, goes back to KD, the Deuteronomistically-shaped compositional layer in the Pentateuch, to which he assigns most of the classic “JE” texts. In 2002, however, Blum has modified his KD hypothesis and now limits its literary extent to Exodus–Deuteronomy.<sup>91</sup> The literary gap between Genesis and Exodus is thus bridged only and for the first time by KP.

Albert de Pury<sup>92</sup> and Thomas Römer<sup>93</sup> are among the pioneers who have opted for a pre-Priestly division of the ancestors and exodus in literary terms. According to de Pury and Römer, Isa 40–55 and “P” are the first Old Testament writings to which the ancestral history and the Moses story form a coherent unit.

Christoph Levin offers a particular redefinition of “J”. He sees “J” as the redactor who combined earlier smaller source fragments between Gen 2 and Num 24 into a literary whole, and he dates “J” between Deuteronomy and the

<sup>85</sup> VORLÄNDER, *Entstehungszeit*.

<sup>86</sup> RENDTORFF, ‘Jahwist’, 158–166, ET: IDEM, ‘Yahwist’, 2–10.

<sup>87</sup> RENDTORFF, *Problem*, 141, 161–162.

<sup>88</sup> RENDTORFF, *Problem*, 163.

<sup>89</sup> RENDTORFF, *Das Alte Testament*, 162.

<sup>90</sup> BLUM, *Komposition*; IDEM, *Studien*; IDEM, ‘The Jacob Tradition’.

<sup>91</sup> BLUM, ‘Verbindung’.

<sup>92</sup> DE PURY, ‘Le cycle de Jacob’; IDEM, ‘The Jacob Story’.

<sup>93</sup> RÖMER, *Israels Väter*; IDEM et al., *Einleitung*; IDEM, ‘Zwischen Urkunden’.

Deuteronomistic History.<sup>94</sup> According to him, it was this exilic Yahwist who first combined the independent components of the ancestral history with the Moses story that begins in Exod 2.<sup>95</sup> The literary link between Genesis and Exodus is thus not too far away from “P” in terms of dating, but it is nevertheless already established in the pre-Priestly Pentateuch.

Already in 1996, Eckart Otto proposed a post-P date for Exod 3–4, which deprived the exodus story of its most prominent literary connection back to Genesis.<sup>96</sup> He later expanded his views on the literary separation of Genesis and Exodus before the Priestly Document.<sup>97</sup> According to him, Exod 2 is the original beginning of a Moses story eventually culminating in Exod 34\*.

Beginning in the late 1990s, the discussion over the literary connection between Genesis and Exodus took different directions in different parts of the globe. In Europe, a certain consensus emerged in the wake of Rendtorff, Blum, de Pury, Römer, Otto and the monographs of Konrad Schmid<sup>98</sup> and Jan C. Gertz<sup>99</sup> from 1999 and 2000, which argued that the basic literary strata in Genesis and Exodus before “P” need to be distinguished. In other words: “J” in Genesis is a different author than “J” in Exodus. Even among those who do not see “P” as the first literary bridge between Genesis and Exodus, there is a certain agreement that the first literary combination of Genesis and Exodus does not predate the 7<sup>th</sup><sup>100</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. Whether or not “P” is the first author in the Pentateuch to create a literary link between the ancestral narratives and the exodus story is still contested. Whereas Blum, de Pury, Römer, Gertz, Schmid, Albertz<sup>101</sup> and Utzschneider/Oswald<sup>102</sup> see no pre-Priestly literary elements connecting Gen 50–Exod 1, David Carr<sup>103</sup> and Christoph Berner argue for a pre-Priestly link between Genesis and Exodus which is, however, nearly contemporaneous with “P”. Berner’s main argument is the character of P as a redactional supplement to the given text in Gen 50 and Exod 1 which presupposes a link in the pre-Priestly text Gen 50:26\*/Exod

---

<sup>94</sup> LEVIN, *Jahwist*, 430–433; IDEM, ‘Earliest Editor’; IDEM, ‘Redactional Link’; IDEM, ‘Nationalepos’.

<sup>95</sup> LEVIN, *Jahwist*, 389–393.

<sup>96</sup> OTTO, ‘Pentateuchredaktion’.

<sup>97</sup> OTTO, ‘Mose und das Gesetz’; OTTO, *Die Tora*.

<sup>98</sup> See the reviews by CARR, *Bib.* 81 (2000), 579–583; SCHMIDT, *TLZ* 125 (2000), 1012–1014; VAN SETERS, *JBL* 119 (2000), 341–343; PFEIFFER, *ZAW* 113 (2001), 320–321; OTTO, ‘Forschungen zum nachpriesterschriftlichen Pentateuch’, 150–152. More extensive treatments are provided by CARR, ‘Genesis in Relation to the Moses Story’; BLUM, ‘Verbindung’; SCHMITT, ‘Erzväter- und Exodusgeschichte’; DAVIES, ‘Transition’.

<sup>99</sup> GERTZ, *Tradition*.

<sup>100</sup> This is the proposal of Erich Zenger and Christian Frevel in ZENGER, *Einleitung*, 123–135.

<sup>101</sup> ALBERTZ, *Ex 1–18*, 19–26.

<sup>102</sup> UTZSCHNEIDER/OSWALD, *Exodus 1–15*, 44–46, 59–61.

<sup>103</sup> CARR, ‘Genesis in Relation to the Moses Story’.

1:6\*; 1:8–12, 15–22\*.<sup>104</sup> Kratz remains undecided and states that the question of a pre- or post-P setting of the link between Genesis and Exodus is of minor importance.<sup>105</sup> Finkelstein and Römer describe their historical analyses of the Abraham- and Jacob texts in the book of Genesis without assuming a pre-Priestly link between Genesis and Exodus.<sup>106</sup>

Parallel to this growing consensus, particularly in German-speaking Europe, a new group of so-called “Neo-Documentarians”<sup>107</sup> arose in the United States and Israel who see the most promising future of pentateuchal studies in “[r]enewing the Documentary Hypothesis”.<sup>108</sup> They propose a model for the composition of the Pentateuch that reckons with the possibility of a nearly complete distribution of the text from Gen 1 through Deut 34 to the four sources “J”, “E”, “P” and “D”.<sup>109</sup> According to them, “J”, “E” and “P” all provide a literary link between Genesis and Exodus, and all of them are probably to be dated to the preexilic period.<sup>110</sup> Currently, it does not seem likely that the positions of the “Neo-Documentarians” and that of the redactionally-oriented pentateuchal scholars will meet any time soon.

## F. Concluding Remarks

Whether or not the near future provides a solution to the literary-historical problem of the connection between Genesis and Exodus is an open question. There are no extant manuscripts of biblical texts from biblical times, and diachronic hypotheses can thus hardly be verified or falsified.<sup>111</sup>

---

<sup>104</sup> BERNER, *Exoduserzählung*, 17. Similarly EDE, *Josefsgeschichte*, 498, 507.

<sup>105</sup> KRATZ, *Komposition*, 288. DOHMEN, *Exodus 1–18*, does not address the question of the link with Genesis in detail.

<sup>106</sup> FINKELSTEIN/RÖMER, ‘Historical Background of the Abraham Narrative’; FINKELSTEIN/RÖMER, ‘Historical Background of the Jacob Narrative’.

<sup>107</sup> See BADEN, *Composition*; STACKERT, *A Prophet Like Moses*, 19–26.

<sup>108</sup> See BADEN, *Composition*.

<sup>109</sup> According to BADEN, *J, E, and the Redaction of the Pentateuch*, 8–9, the redactor “is a necessary side-effect of the recognition of multiple sources in the text, not a primary feature of the theory. The theory demands a redactor, because the sources were evidently combined by someone – but no more than one” (see also 289, 305 and 255–286). See also SCHWARTZ, ‘Compiler’; IDEM, ‘Joseph’s Descent’ [Hebrew]. Remarkably, the proponents of the traditional documentary solution to the literary problem of the Pentateuch argue in a more differentiated way, see, e.g., SCHMIDT, ‘Dickicht’.

<sup>110</sup> See STACKERT, *A Prophet like Moses*, 31–35.

<sup>111</sup> One might discuss the silver amulets possibly from the late 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. which offer a text close to Num 6:24–26, but this text is not of fundamental compositional significance for the Pentateuch, and it seems to be used as a liturgical entity unto itself in those amulets; see BERLEJUNG, ‘Der gesegnete Mensch’; EADEM, ‘Ein Programm fürs Leben’.

The plausibility of different diachronic explanations for the composition of the Pentateuch depends largely on the general picture scholars have of the religious, intellectual, cultural and sociological development of ancient Israel and Judah. In turn, this picture often depends, at least in part, on specific literary-historical theories of biblical literature. Yet it has become clear from looking back into pentateuchal scholarship since Astruc that the literary separation of the non-Priestly material in Genesis and Exodus as it has been discussed in the last two decades of pentateuchal research is not a new invention. Rather, as this contribution has shown, it was a continuous part of critical Hebrew Bible scholarship since its beginnings in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.