Main Part:
The History of Pentateuchal Tradition

Section I
Analysis of the Elements of the Tradition

6.
The Historical Presuppositions of the Formation of the Tradition

Apart from the primeval history, which was added later, the subject of the Pentateuchal narratives is "Israel," the totality of those tribes that have been so designated in the course of history. Only in Num. 32 do we find survivals of an old tradition of the occupation which deals specifically with particular tribes. However, we may presume that the conclusion of this occupation tradition, which is no longer extant, undoubtedly also reported in similar fashion about the rest of the tribes, so that even in this instance the theme of the occupation of the land was understood on the whole in terms of all Israel. Few narratives in Genesis pertain to individual ancestors of Israelite tribes, but precisely for this reason they stand clearly and conspicuously outside the framework of the whole work, as for example in the case of Gen. 38 or Gen. 48. The Joseph story, on the other hand, cannot be adduced in this fashion to original materials with more limited relationships without at the same time dropping out of the corpus of Pentateuchal traditions. In contrast to the underlying substance of the narratives in Judges, the Pentateuch is concerned only with "Israel" as a whole and its common ancestors. And the names of the twelve tribes occur only in their totality, except for the few passages mentioned above.

Of course, originally most of the tradition-materials in the Pentateuch were quite limited in their reference, indeed limited more to locality than to tribal history, and often this reference shows through clearly in the transmitted form. But in the Pentateuch these materials manifestly have only an all-Israelite significance. Thus it is clear that the Pentateuch did not come into being by the summation of individual narratives, which, having been gradually accumulated from the sphere of all Israelite tribes and connected with one another in manifold ways, finally yielded by virtue of their combination an overall picture of a history or of a prehistory of all Israel.86 Rather, the all-Israelite scheme of the Pentateuchal tradition was presupposed from the very first and the individual materials, whatever their origin and prehistory, were at once given an all-Israelite orientation in the very act of being incorporated into the sphere of the Pentateuchal tradition. The origin of the individual materials thus does not belong so much to the history of the Pentateuchal tradition as to its prehistory, at least in many instances. And, as will be shown more specifically in what follows, the origin of the Pentateuchal tradition presupposes the existence of the historical phenomenon "Israel" in the sense indicated previously. This gives a definite historical presupposition and a terminus a quo for the beginning of the Pentateuchal tradition. The question as to when and how the historical Israel with its twelve tribes came into existence is complicated and cannot be discussed in detail here. In all probability this did not happen until the occupation of Palestine or afterwards. Consequently, that event would have been the historical condition for the formation of the Pentateuchal tradition, and the soil of the arable land of Palestine would have been the historical arena for its origin, development, and completion. The truth of this is also attested by various matters which will be dealt with subsequently.

86 Similarly, out of the predeuteronomistic collection of the hero stories of the present Book of Judges (cf. Martin Noth, Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien I [1943], pp. 49f.), there emerged secondarily a kind of history of "Israel" in the prestate period, inasmuch as the collective name "Israel" already occurs occasionally in the predeuteronomistic materials. These appearances of "Israel" are probably traces of such a first collection of hero stories which originally referred to individual tribes.
At the same time, that event fixes chronologically the earliest possible date for the beginning of the Pentateuchal tradition.

A terminus ad quem for the creative stage of the history of the Pentateuch can also be established with some probability. By “creative stage” is meant here the preliterary history of the formation and the growth of the tradition into a pattern that came to be firmly fixed in all essentials. For the earliest literary records merely gave fixed form to a tradition that was already firmly arranged and fully developed in content, even though they may have shaped the whole in their own respective ways and even may have added all kinds of narrative materials. And since, apart from the primeval history, these literary records added no really new theme, either in great or small matters, they cannot be included within the “creative stage” of the history of traditions, even though in the theological reworking of the whole they have taken completely new and individual paths.

Now, quite apart from the disputed questions of the dating of the literary records, the period of the creative preliterary formation of the tradition can be broadly indicated with considerable probability. For the Pentateuchal tradition is on the whole a saga-tradition, in the sense that it had no particular “author” or even “authors” but rather emerged, developed, and was transmitted through the mouths of “narrators” within the anonymous totality of the tribes and their several clans at those times when they were gathered together, that is, preeminently on cultic occasions. However, soil conducive to the vigorous growth of a saga-tradition in this sense is usually found in a situation where the history of a people is borne by the community of its tribes, who deliberate and act as members of the whole, a situation which prevails before a state government in the proper sense takes over with its own organs of leadership and responsibility, thereby curtailing the independent life of the tribes. During the time of statehood, the saga-tradition is replaced, as a rule, by written history. This historiography, though at first quite unpretentious, is always in its own way a “scholarly” work behind which there is no longer a community which enjoys telling and hearing stories, but rather some author whose name may or may not be known to posterity. Everything points to the fact that these generally observed circumstances pertain also to the case at hand.

The beginnings of a distinct historiography appear concomitantly with the formation of Israel as a state, and indeed within the circle of the royal court. Accordingly, we may presume that the origin and growth of the saga-tradition, and hence the creative stage of the history of the Pentateuch, falls essentially in the preceding period when the tribes and clans lived independently, and that by and large this came to an end with the rise of the monarchy. To be sure, to understand the origin of the Pentateuch it is neither absolutely necessary, nor is it even possible, to go beyond a relative chronological arrangement of the various stages to a precise dating of the whole process and its individual phases. In general, however, it is necessary to keep in view the historical world within which, on the whole, this process took place. That world was the sphere of the Israelite tribes living on the soil of the arable land of Palestine between the time of the occupation of the land and the beginning of the formation of the state.
Gerhard von Rad, in his previously mentioned study on “The Form-
critical Problem of the Hexateuch,” has shown how certain statements of
faith, grounded in the cult and formulated in a confessional manner, con-
stituted the roots from which in time, like a mighty tree, the Pentateuch
grew. These confessional statements had as their content certain basic themes
derived from Israel’s own history which God had directed in a special way.
These themes were not added to one another all at once in order to form the
basis for the further expansion of the Pentateuchal tradition, but rather were
joined together step by step in a definite sequence which can still be deter-
mind in general. We can therefore put these themes in a definite order
according to their traditio-historical priority and in this order discuss them
one by one, thereby gaining at the same time a general view of the develop-
ment of the Pentateuchal tradition.

Of course, the theme of the primeval history, having been added first of all
in one of the literary accounts, must be eliminated altogether from the pre-
literary formation of the Pentateuch. Moreover, the theme of the patriarchal
history, as Kurt Galling has already quite correctly seen,154 was only second-
arily placed before the following themes. Thus the starting point of the whole
is to be sought within the complex of traditions which present themselves
to us as the Mosaic history. Now, von Rad has demonstrated154a that within
this complex the Sinai tradition again represents a separate theme which
was worked into the whole corpus rather late, so that what finally remains
as primary is the “occupation tradition” (Landnahmetradition) in von Rad’s
sense. Of course this theme, as will presently be demonstrated, is not a pri-
mary and original unit either, but is itself composed of several primitive
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“Israel” is predominantly designated by reference to this act.159 It is no different in classical prophecy. Yahweh has called his son, that is, Israel, out of Egypt (Hos. 11:1)160 and thus he is the God of Israel “from the land of Egypt” (Hos. 12:10; 13:4).161 “Bringing Israel up from the land of Egypt” was the first of God’s benevolent acts toward his people (Mic. 6:4), accompanied by the making of the former covenant between God and people (Jer. 31:32).162 With the “guidance of Israel out of the land of Egypt” God began his work with “Israel” (Ezek. 20:5, 6, 9, 10).163 Hence elsewhere in the Old Testament this event is referred to again and again: in old narratives such as Josh. 2:10 and Judg. 6:13 and II Sam. 7:23 and I Sam. 4:8; in the framework of the Deuteronomic law (Deut. 7:8; 18f.; 11:10) and in its secondary additions (Deut. 4:45, 66; 29:1, 24); in the Holiness Code (Lev. 25:42, 55; 26:45); in the Deuteronomistic historian’s work (Josh. 9:9; Judg. 6:8f.; I Sam. 10:18; 12:6, 8; I Kings 8:9, 51, 53) and in its later expansions (Deut. 4:20, 37; Judg. 2:1); in the hymns praising the great acts of God (Ps. 114:1ff.; 135:8f.; 136:10ff.); in the community laments under the “motives for the hearing of prayer” (Ps. 80:9–12).164

In the brief catechism-like summaries of the fundamental historical events in the “short historical credo,” the “guidance out of Egypt” appears as the true major act of God (Deut. 26:8; 6:21–23; Josh. 24:6, 7). In the case of this so-called “historizing” of the ancient cultic agrarian festivals of Canaan, these festivals could not refer to any other historical event than the “bringing of Israel out of Egypt”; so, for example, the Passover in the Deuteronomic law (Deut. 16:1, 3, 6) and in other Deuteronomic passages (Ex. 12:26, 27a; 13:3, 8f., 14–16; 23:15 = 34:18) and the Feast of Tabernacles in the Holiness Code (Lev. 23:43). The social demands of the laws are often based upon the recollection that the Israelites were strangers and unfree men (“slaves”) in Egypt before Yahweh led them out; so especially in the Deuteronomic law (Deut. 15:15; 16:12; 23:8; 24:18, 22) and in the secondary material of the Deuteronomic framework (Deut. 5:15; 10:19); but also in the Holiness Code (Lev. 19:34) and in secondary passages of the Book of the Covenant (Ex. 22:20; 23:9).

Indeed, the expression “Yahweh who brought Israel out of Egypt” obviously very early became a fixed formula which occurs in widely differing contexts. We find it in the ancient Balaam oracles (Num. 24:8 = 23:22), in the introduction to the Decalogue (Ex. 20:2 = Deut. 5:6; cf. also Ps. 81:11), in the interpretation of the “golden calves” of Jeroboam I (I Kings 12:28; cf. Ex. 32:4, 8; Neh. 9:18), in the wealth of formulas from the time of Jeremiah (Jer. 2:6; 16:14 = 23:7), in the Deuteronomic law (Deut. 13:11; 20:1; secondarily in 13:6) and in its framework (Deut. 6:12; 8:14), in the Deuteronomic History (Judg. 2:12; I Kings 9:9; II Kings 17:7; secondarily, Josh. 24:17; II Kings 17:36); in the Holiness Code (Lev. 19:36; 22:33; 25:38; 26:13), in the Priestly Narrative (Ex. 29:46), in cultic laws (Lev. 11:45; Num. 15:41) and sporadically elsewhere (Ps. 50:7166; Dan. 9:15). This expression of Israel’s affirmation of faith in a formula which was somewhat fixed and obviously widely distributed in place and time—one which in its pregnant significance and its predominantly participial formulation is unmistakably related to the hymnic style—can hardly be considered a secondary phenomenon, even though unquestionably early examples are scarce. Rather, it must be regarded as a very original expression for a content that was fundamentally important.

In the case of the “guidance out of Egypt” we are dealing with a primary confession (Urhebenkenntnis) of Israel, one that is expressed rather strictly in hymnic form, and at the same time with the kernel of the whole subsequent Pentateuchal tradition. Although we know very little about the inner life of ancient Israel, we have here—unless we are completely mistaken—a common confession of all Israel. Thus, unlike the themes to be discussed subsequently, there is in the case of this theme no place for the question as to the particular tribal group within which it might have been created or at least might have received its special manner of formulation. Even the further question as to which particular cultic occasions constituted the proper Sitz im Leben for the hymnic expression of this confession perhaps should not be raised here, and in any

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159 In this usage it occurs several times without explicit mention of God as the subject; so likewise in the ancient passage Judg. 19:30, furthermore in Deut. 9:7; Jer. 7:25; and in the case of Dtr in I Kings 6:1; II Kings 21:15. Otherwise it is found in the usual form as in the ancient passage in II Sam. 7:6 and in the case of Dtr in I Sam. 8:8; I Kings 8:16. Also substantively Amos 9:7 belongs in this context, while the authenticity of Amos 2:10 and Amos 3:1 is at least open to doubt.

160 Cf. also Hos. 2:17.

161 Hos. 12:14 is probably not from Hosea.

162 Concerning this close connection of the “making of the covenant” with the “guidance out of Egypt,” with which Jer. 34:13 and also Deut. 29:24 and I Kings 8:9 are especially to be compared, it is very questionable whether the reference is to the Sinai covenant or whether rather the “guidance out of Egypt” itself is to be understood as the act of covenant making. Elsewhere the deliverance from Egypt is repeatedly mentioned in the prose passages of the book of Jeremiah written in Deuteronomistic style (Jer. 7:22; 11:4, 7; 32:20f.).

163 Cf. also the non-Isaianic passage Is. 11:16, and further within a late prophetic liturgy Mic. 7:15, and the addition in Hag. 2:5.

164 Of course, passages having a literary dependence on the already completed Pentateuchal narrative must be disregarded, such as the hymns Ps. 78; 105; 106 or the penitential prayer Neh. 9:6ff.

165 Cf. Gerhard von Rad, Das formgeschichtliche Problem, pp. 8ff. [E. T., pp. 1ff.]

166 Here the participial apposition crucial for our context has been lost but is to be restored for the original text with Sigmund Mowinckel, Le décalogue (1927), p. 8.
case cannot be answered, for this confession was so universally relevant that
it could have and must have been recited at any cultic occasion which called
for a hymn at all.

Even though this state of affairs seems certain in view of the evidence
presented and in view of the entire course of Israel’s inner history, it is
nevertheless difficult to say how the “guidance out of Egypt” came to be a
common, primary confession of all Israel. Of course here, in the last analysis,
we strike the bedrock of an historical occurrence. What is more, the activity
of the divine subject mentioned in the confessional formula originally seems
to have referred to the “destruction of the Egyptians in the Sea.”\(^{167}\) Presumably
this is what is meant above all whenever the “signs and wonders,” “the
great and terrible acts” of God, and the like, are mentioned in this context.\(^{168}\)
In contrast to Israel’s sojourn in Egypt and the conscription to slave labor
which, though implicitly presupposed in the confession of the “guidance out
of Egypt,” were not in themselves particularly remarkable, the event at the
Sea was so unique and extraordinary that it came to constitute the essence
of the primary Israelite confession and was regarded as the real beginning
of Israel’s history and the act of God fundamental for Israel.

Yet if behind this confession, as the ultimate basis, there is really an
historical occurrence which can no longer be analysed, then precisely for
this reason the question arises as to how an all-Israelite confession could
originate from it. For everything that we are able to ascertain about the
process of the occupation of the land by the Israelite tribes speaks against
the possibility that they constituted beforehand a somewhat tight or loose union
of people who shared a common history and who therefore also participated
in the event at the Sea. Indeed, one must even object to the frequently
raised question as to which group from the subsequently united Israelite tribes
might have been the tradition-bearer of the events in Egypt and at the
Sea, for the Israelite tribes who later came to be known were essentially
considered only in the course of the occupation in Palestine, and hence did
not even exist as tribes before then. Furthermore, it is unlikely that entire
tribes would have participated in the events under discussion. Thus one will
have to assume that later on the clans who experienced the events in Egypt
and at the Sea from time to time became part of the associations of Israelite
tribes which banded together and occupied the land. Moreover, they probably
became involved in a number of tribes and tribal groups rather than in
just one tribe. As a result what they experienced was disseminated in wider

\(^{167}\) In this way the real essence of the so-called “miracle of the Reed Sea” would have
to be described, according to the oldest preserved testimony to this, the hymnic couplet
in Ex. 15: 21b.

\(^{168}\) Of the above-cited passages cf. Judg. 6: 13; Deut. 26: 8; Josh. 24: 17; Deut.
6: 22; 7: 19; 29: 1ff.; Jer. 32: 20ff.; Mic. 7: 15.

circles of Israel and, enthralling those who had not originally participated
with its unique character and power, came to be a basic tenet of faith belong-
ing to all Israelite tribes. Whether this or something like it happened—the
historical question is merely of incidental interest here—we must in any case
reckon with the fact that the belief in the deliverance from Egypt belonged
to the oldest and most universal heritage of the Israelite tribes as a whole.

It is easy to understand that, because of its concern with an historical event,
this statement of faith, in addition to its brief confession-like formulation in
hymnic style, inevitably tended to find expression in narrative form. On oc-
casions of cultic gatherings throughout the territory of the Israelite tribes,
men skilful in speech would have recited the substance of this faith over and
over again. Here, next to the actual main subject of the destruction of the
Egyptians in the Sea and as introduction thereto, the sojourn of the Israelites
in Egypt, their conscription for slave labor, and their flight from Egypt
also belonged to the indispensable and fixed stock of narrative motifs, which
could be enriched by further motifs according to the skill of the particular
narrator. In any case, we must deduce that it happened this way even without
being able to give evidence in detail.

The narrative of the deliverance from Egypt constitutes the point of
crystalization of the great Pentateuchal narrative in its entirety. Since this
nucleus, as we have shown, is based upon an all-Israelite primary confession,
it follows that the Pentateuchal narrative had an all-Israelite orientation
from the very beginning. And it is understandable that from that time on all the
other themes and materials received an all-Israelite reference too, at least
through their being included within the sphere of the Pentateuchal tradition.

b) The Theme “Guidance into the Arable Land”

In many of the above-cited passages (pp. 48f.) the “guidance out of
Egypt” is referred to solely as a subject of confession which stands by itself,
having no need for supplementation. Yet frequently the further declaration
is immediately and closely joined—though no longer formulated with such
striking uniformity and simplicity or characterized by such a fixed pattern—
that after “the guidance out of Egypt” Yahweh led Israel into the (good)
land which now, in its historical existence, it possesses (Deut. 26: 9; 6: 23;
Amos 2: 9f.; Jer. 2: 7; Ezek. 20: 6; Judg. 6: 9; 1 Sam 12: 8; Deut. 4: 38;
Judg. 2: 1; Josh. 24: 8; Jer. 32: 22; Lev. 25: 38; Pss. 114: 3; 5; 135: 1ff.;
136: 17ff.; 80: 9ff.). This indicates that while the confessional statement
about the deliverance from Egypt was a primary matter in terms of its
independence of content and form, it nevertheless easily and frequently attract-
ed the secondary expansion indicated above, since that expansion expressed

\(^{168}\) Of the above-cited passages cf. Judg. 6: 13; Deut. 26: 8; Josh. 24: 17; Deut.
6: 22; 7: 19; 29: 1ff.; Jer. 32: 20ff.; Mic. 7: 15.
what was already basically contained in the confession. Thus to the negative action of the deliverance from the hand of the Egyptians was added the positive goal, already implicitly intended in that action, of the constitution of a "free" Israel on its own soil and land, corresponding to the historical situation at the time when these confessional statements were first formulated.

On the basis of Deut. 26:1-11 von Rad has clearly shown that the cultic observance of the presentation of the "first fruits" of the harvest at the sanctuaries of the land was manifestly the occasion when the confession concerning the "guidance into the arable land" was to be recited, and that, as a solemn affirmation of the present reality of what was expressed therein, this confession determined the actual content of the cultic act. In the main it holds true for the Israelite territory, where of course the tribes did not live close together in a compact and separate area, that during the premonarchic period the tribes constantly found themselves more or less in the position of having to assert their claim upon the land. And in such a situation this claim needed the inner strength of conviction supplied by the confession of faith in the God who, with a corresponding resolution of the will, revealed himself mightily in the "guidance of Israel out of Egypt." Thus the confession that Yahweh willed the possession of the land might have belonged in a rather period the tribes constantly found themselves more or less in the position that what was already basically contained in the confession. Thus to the presentation of the first fruits. Accordingly, here also we would be dealing with a matter involving all Israel.

Nevertheless, the confession concerning the "guidance into the arable land," formulated apparently in quite general terms, necessarily made its way into the narrative exposition, where it had to be furnished with concrete narrative material. At this stage in the narrative exposition there could only be a parting of the ways. For since there was no historical event of an all-Israelite occupation of the land, but only the penetration by individual tribes or tribal groups—each in its own way and manner—into areas which later came to be in their possession, there could not have been an all-Israelite memory of the occupation. Thus in its particular way each tribal group first had to tell or had to be told about the theme of "the guidance into the arable land." From the point of view and in terms of its memories and conceptions of the occupation. However, the subsequent connection of the theme "guidance into the arable land" with the primary theme "guidance out of Egypt" permitted that theme to be conceived and narrated only in an all-Israelite perspective. Consequently, within the limits of the origin of the Pentateuch there was no place for a portrayal, corresponding to the historical event itself, of the various ways in which the individual Israelite tribes occupied the land. For within the various tribal groups this could only have led to narratives of a common all-Israelite occupation which competed with and diverged from one another.

The story attributing the occupation of the land to the totality of the tribes was taken up into the evolving Pentateuch in the form told among the central Palestinian tribes, i.e., the tribes of the so-called Rachel group. At this stage, therefore, the growth of the Pentateuchal narrative took place in the circle of the central Palestinian tribes. For the route leading through southern Transjordan (the present region of el-Belqâ) and then across the lower Jordan, which is presupposed as the one by which all Israel entered into the Promised Land, is in reality the route of occupation cherished in the memory or tradition of the central Palestinian tribes. This is indicated by the series of ancient Benjaminite etiological narratives found in the first half of the Book of Joshua, whose conception already reflects the memory that the clans comprising the tribe of Benjamin had come across the lower course of the Jordan River. The same holds for the tribe of Joseph, however, if it is true that the נבカラー והנין, who later constituted a large subdivision of the tribe, actually received their name from the territory of a Canaanite city-state "Ephraim" (on whose soil they supposedly first gained a foothold in the arable land and after which they accordingly would have been named); and if this city-state of Ephraim is to be placed in the present Khirbet el-Marjameh in the valley of ʿAin es-Samieh in the southeastern corner of the Samaritan hill country. On that assumption the Samaritan hill country was settled from the southeast by the group known as the "Rachel tribes," i.e., from the direction of southern Transjordan which during the
transitional from the Bronze to the Iron Age was astir with many different population movements, while the southern and northern Palestinian tribes undoubtedly attained their later dwelling places in the arable land in different ways of their own.

Thus the influence of the central Palestinian tribal group, which guarded in their region the common amphictyonic covenantal shrine of the Ark, and which played a leading role owing to their central location and manifestly owing to their significance and power as well, decisively determined the development of the theme “guidance into the arable land.” This influence would become even more understandable if the occasion for the narrative exposition was preeminently that of the gatherings at the central sanctuary, when all the tribes found themselves within the territory of the central Palestinian tribes and within their purview, and thus in the sphere where the specifically central Palestinian form of the tradition could very easily become an all-Israelite one.

The narrative exposition of the theme “guidance into the arable land” did not find a smooth connection with the narrative of the Exodus from Egypt. The question as to why the Israelites suddenly found themselves in southern Transjordan, where they had to make a detour around Edom in order to resume from that point the route toward their later dwelling places, is in no way answered in the Pentateuch in connection with the narrative of the deliverance out of the hand of the Egyptians. The gap that yawns here in the narrative is only partially covered up by stories of the wilderness sojourn added later from an entirely different context. This suggests first of all, that here we have in fact two different themes, each of which has retained its own narrative exposition; and secondly, that here we cannot assume a simple and original historical connection, such as that the central Palestinian “Rachel tribes” were those who experienced the sojourn in Egypt and the deliverance from the hand of the Egyptians and that therefore the central Palestinian form of the tradition prevailed at the core of the Pentateuch. Quite apart from other considerations, the absence of narrative continuity speaks against such an historical connection. The striking situation at hand is not conditioned historically but tradition-historically, and thus must be explained along the lines taken above.

c) The Theme “Promise to the Patriarchs”

The figures known as the patriarchs are the subject of a unique kind of narrative tradition, one that at first arose independently of the Pentateuchal

174 The observation in Ex. 13: 17f. is a later literary product prompted by the clear awareness of the gap present here in the tradition. This, however, in no way explains the question stated above; nor does Nu 14: 25b either.

the land, the patriarchal narratives came to be related to, and at the same time began to compete with, the Pentateuchal themes of the “guidance out of Egypt” and the “guidance into the arable land.” And so it came about that the theme “patriarchs” was included in the circle of Pentateuchal themes.

This development had important consequences on both sides. In regard to the patriarchal tradition, it meant a one-sided shift of emphasis to the element of the promise of the land and posterity contained in this tradition. This shift meant a distinct enrichment of the content of the Pentateuch with a new feature, and at the same time necessarily entailed putting the patriarchal theme first. The result was that the fulfillment of this promise now had to be completely dropped from the theme of the “patriarchs” and its actual realization was deferred until the theme “guidance into the arable land,” which originally had nothing to do with the patriarchal tradition at all.178

In regard to the Pentateuch, this development meant first of all a considerable enlargement of its scope around a theme capable of manifold expansion, and an important contribution to the diversity of its content. Beyond this, however, it introduced the great historico-theological thread of “promise and fulfillment” which binds together the entire work from beginning to end on the basis of the identification of the gods of the fathers, or more correctly “the God of the fathers,” with the God who brought Israel out of Egypt and led her into the arable land. In this way the Pentateuch received essentially the form which it has retained. At the same time, the basis was provided for theologizing its contents, so that it became the witness to God’s purposeful saving activity.

The introduction of the theme “promise to the patriarchs” into the Pentateuchal tradition, however, was in itself a complicated process which had several stages. It is certain that this theme was first treated only in relation to the figure of Jacob. This stage of the development of the Pentateuch, where only Jacob is “patriarch,” is presupposed in the cultic confession in Deut. 26: 5–9. Since Jacob became the father of the twelve tribes and emigrated with his family to Egypt, he was the only patriarch to be directly connected with the older Pentateuchal themes, while the other patriarchs were connected with the rest of the Pentateuchal themes only through Jacob. Accordingly, the genealogical form of connection arose out of the content of the ancient patriarchal tradition, going back to clan cults, in which a particular promise given to an ancestor was to reach its fulfillment in posterity. Thus, when the themes were combined, the Israelites who were delivered out of Egypt and led into the arable land—and who necessarily in the exposition of the “occupation” theme appeared separately according to their tribes—had to retain Jacob as their immediate common ancestor.

With the inclusion of the “patriarchal” theme in the form of Jacob we find ourselves still in the central Palestinian stage of the formation of the Pentateuch. For in their intrinsic content all Jacob narratives are associated exclusively with places in the area of the central Palestinian tribes, namely, the famous sanctuaries of Shechem and Bethel, and some holy places of the Ephraimite colonial territory in the ancient land of Gilead.177 It cannot be precisely determined to what extent the Jacob tradition (and this holds true correspondingly for the other patriarchal traditions), which undoubtedly contains some very old and original elements, was compiled and worked out before its incorporation into the Pentateuchal tradition; and to what extent within the corpus of the Pentateuchal tradition it was further expanded narratively within the circle of the central Palestinian tribes. The main elements of the contents of the Jacob tradition and the main features of its outline were certainly fixed before it had any connection with the Pentateuchal tradition.

On the other hand, the narrative series which we regard stylistically as the main example of the later so-called “discursive” narrative style,178 namely the Joseph story, proves to be a late element traditio-historically insofar as it presupposes that the chief themes have already been combined. As Deut. 26: 5 shows, the narrative connection of the Jacob story with the usual Pentateuchal themes was made at first without the Joseph story. The simple narrative motif indicated here of Jacob’s settlement in Egypt with his family then formed in turn the basis for the origin and unfolding of the Joseph story. Moreover, the accretion of the Joseph story belongs to the central Palestinian stage of Pentateuchal formation, for the Joseph story, insofar as it has a Palestinian setting at all, takes place in the central Palestinian arena. And above all the role of Joseph and his brother Benjamin within the circle of the sons of Jacob is to be explained traditio-historically, rather than historically, by considering that this narrative series originated as an accretion to the Pentateuchal narrative among the “Rachel” tribes and hence ascribed a favored role to the ancestors of these tribes.

The significance and the influence of the important central Palestinian tribes, in whose province all of Israel periodically gathered around the common sanctuary of the Ark, suggests that the Pentateuchal tradition which came to be the common Israelite epic was that form shaped by the particular memories and traditions of the central Palestinian tribes and reflective of their point of view. In any case, it may be considered probable that among all Israelite tribes the important events of ancient times were told or heard approximately in the version established by the determinative central tribes. This common heritage probably flourished also among the southern tribes. Among these southern tribes, however, the taking over of the tradition—

177 For details on the latter see Martin Noth, PJ 37 (1941), pp. 58ff.
material at this stage led to the further development of Pentateuchal tradition toward that form which is the basis of the first written records. We can no longer determine with the means available to us whether this further development was a special accomplishment of the southern tribes; or whether the Pentateuchal tradition came to be split up into various special forms which were developed and cherished in the various tribal groups, of which only the special form of the southern tribes survives; or finally, whether the tradition as expanded by the southern tribes became the common Israelite heritage, due perhaps to the growing importance of these tribes. Among the southern tribes the stories of Isaac and Abraham were added to the theme of the "patriarchs." These stories introduce nothing fundamentally new but provide a very lively variation to the theme "promise to the patriarchs." In terms of origin, significance, and nature they were intrinsically related to the Jacob stories, differing from the latter only by being attached to places in the territory of the southern tribes. Therefore in the circles where they were current, i.e., among the tribes of the Judean hill country and especially of the Negeb, their subsequent connection with the Jacob stories was an easy matter. When the simple genealogical form of connection was selected as a preface to the Jacob stories, the tracing of the genealogical sequence backwards led very naturally to Abraham and Isaac.

d) The Theme "Guidance in the Wilderness"

The various narratives of divine help during the distress and privation of the wilderness belong to none of the themes discussed so far. It is apparent that these narratives develop a special theme; for in the summaries of God's acts mentioned above (pp. 48ff.), the "guidance in the wilderness" is occasionally cited as a particular point (as, for example, Deut. 29: 4f.; Jer. 2: 6; Amos 2: 10; Ps. 136: 16). However, it is also obvious that this is not a very important or really independent theme. It presupposes in every instance the themes "guidance out of Egypt" and "guidance into the promised land" and depends on both of these. Nevertheless this theme is treated in an imposing number of individual narratives. It is not apparent from the structure of the Pentateuchal narrative itself at which stage in the development of the Pentateuch, after the combination of both of the first major themes, the theme "guidance in the wilderness" was brought into the whole work. We discuss it at this point since it was clearly a contribution of the southern tribes to the Pentateuch and therefore belongs within the larger context of the expansion of the Pentateuchal tradition in the circle of these southern tribes. In contrast to the other themes discussed so far this theme seems to lack any cultic rootage, even though individual stories with a cultic content have clearly contributed to its narrative development; of this we shall speak in detail later on. Probably this theme arose simply from the narrative desire to tell something concrete about the further fortunes of the Israelite tribes after the "guidance out of Egypt." More specifically, it displays interest in the fortunes of those tribes who came into direct contact with the wilderness between Egypt and Palestine, who were familiar with the caravan routes and their few water sites, and hence who knew from experience the troubles and afflictions to which one was exposed in this area. As will become evident in greater detail later on, this theme is developed primarily in stories connected with a few wilderness water sites, which can be regarded as the southern-most extremes of Palestine and which accordingly the inhabitants of the Judean hills, and especially the seminomadic elements of the southern Judean Negeb, still continued to have contact. When it is considered that the stories of Isaac and Abraham are also originally attached to places in the Negeb, one realizes that the development of the theme "promise to the patriarchs" and the introduction of the theme "guidance in the wilderness" must be sought approximately in the same circle. In this circle the acquaintance with those water sites in the wilderness must have brought to mind the experiences of the Israelites who once were "guided out of Egypt," and thus prompted the formation of the theme "guidance in the wilderness."

This traces the growth of the Pentateuchal tradition essentially up to the point represented by the relatively fixed form found in the summary outline in Josh. 24: 2–13 as well as in the concise hymnic recital of the great acts of God in Ps. 135: 8–12 and Ps. 136: 10–22.

e) The Theme "Revelation at Sinai"

In his study of the basis of Israel's election-faith, Kurt Galling correctly observed that throughout the entire Old Testament tradition the Sinai covenant quite strikingly recedes into the background behind the "Exodus tradition." Von Rad then convincingly demonstrated that the "Sinai tradition" was an entity having its own origin and history, which was incorporated into the great corpus of the Pentateuchal tradition secondarily...
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and late. After von Rad’s studies it is scarcely necessary to repeat here that the Sinai tradition was based on the legend used in a festival of covenant-making or covenant-renewal. To be sure, not much is known concretely about this festival; but, as may be seen especially from Deut. 31: 10ff., it presumably took place regularly at the central sanctuary in the fall, that is, at the turn of the year, and was somehow combined with the old Canaanite feast of tabernacles which was celebrated about the same time and belonged to the ancient Canaanite agricultural tradition. In the course of the observance of this festival, which in Israel was celebrated as a reactualization of the Sinai event, the structure and content of the theme “revelation at Sinai” are said to have been decisively determined. If these suppositions are all correct, then this festival must have had significance for all Israel, and thus the theme “revelation at Sinai” must have been originally and inherently an all-Israelite tradition.

Of course, one cannot overlook the fact that these last statements give rise to questions which have not yet been answered and which, in my opinion, can only be answered conjecturally. Why do we learn so little definite in the Old Testament about that festival of covenant-making or covenant-renewal, which one is supposed to regard as an event of fundamental and central significance? Above all, in the “historicizing” of the “feast of tabernacles” found in Lev. 23: 43, why is the reference back to the “guidance out of Egypt” rather than to the “revelation at Sinai”? After all, the substantive connection between this feast and the Exodus theme is so little compelling or convincing that a reference to Sinai would not have been any more awkward, and at the least would have been suggested by the fact that the feast of tabernacles coincided chronologically with the festival of covenant-making or covenant-renewal. And why—outside the Pentateuch and independent of the Pentateuchal tradition—is an unambiguous mention of Sinai and the event that occurred there found so strikingly seldom in the Old Testament, if indeed a reactualization of this event took place regularly in a cultic festival? Finally, why was it that an all-Israelite tradition concerning such an important event in the fundamental history of Israel apparently did not become one of the themes of the great Pentateuchal tradition until a late stage?

These questions are difficult to answer with any degree of certainty. They indicate first of all that the simple thesis that revelation and covenant-making at Sinai are, according to tradition, the basis of Old Testament faith and the foundation of Israel’s election, cannot be accepted without thorough substantiation. According to the evidence in the Old Testament the “guidance out of Egypt” would be the more likely basis. However, “revelation at Sinai” and “guidance out of Egypt” are two entirely different themes which tradition-historically went their own ways before, at a rather late stage, they were combined with each other in the Pentateuch. On the other hand, the festival of covenant-making and covenant-renewal, from which the tradition-theme “revelation at Sinai” is derived, gives the impression of being something original and fundamental.

The problem before us can only be brought toward a solution historically in terms of a prehistory which was surely richer and more dynamic than would appear from the summarization and simplification of later tradition. The evidence adduced suggests that the theme “revelation at Sinai” comes out of a situation which, in a later era, seemed removed to a somewhat misty and distant past, for the reason that new events, institutions, and conceptions had pushed decisively to the fore in the meantime and now virtually dominated the field. The festival of covenant-making or covenant-renewal, with its reactualization of the theme “revelation at Sinai,” would then actually have to be regarded as part of the oldest tradition preserved for us in the Old Testament. It remains so far in the background because the comparatively more recent themes of the “guidance out of Egypt” and the “guidance into the arable land” had such a strong attraction as the basis of faith and election and, being newer, held the field. As has already been mentioned, it was by no means the ancestors of all the Israelite tribes who participated in the events in and around Egypt, but only smaller groups which later joined the larger circle. Accordingly, it is historically plausible that among the settling Israelite tribes the events of covenant and election had become fundamental tenets of faith at an earlier time, on the basis of experiences which had befallen other groups and which again belong to an ultimate body of no longer analyzable historical data. Periodically these events were effectively reconfirmed at a festival of covenant-making or covenant-renewal.

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184 Cf. Gerhard von Rad, Das formgeschichtliche Problem, pp. 11ff. [E. T., pp. 13ff.]
185 This view goes back especially to Sigmund Mowinckel, above all to his stimulating exposition in his book Le dialogue, Etude d’histoire et de philosophie religieuse, No. 16 (1927), pp. 144ff.
186 There are only a few passages in which the name Sinai occurs outside of the Pentateuch. They are the passages that speak of “Yahweh’s coming from Sinai,” as for example in Deut. 33: 2 (Deut. 33: 2ff. is a passage which originated independently of the Pentateuchal tradition); Ps. 68: 18 (according to the corrected text); Judg. 5: 5 = Ps. 68: 9 (where the name Sinai is probably found in an addition). Neh. 9: 13 is dependent upon the Pentateuchal tradition.

The name Horeb (instead of Sinai) as a designation of the mountain of the theophany and giving of the law is mentioned several times secondarily in the Pentateuchal narrative, and also in several Deuteronomistic and Deuteronomistic passages which are

187 There are only a few passages in which the name Sinai is dependent upon the content of the Pentateuchal tradition, as well as in Ps. 106: 19 and Mal. 3: 22. It occurs independently of the Pentateuch only in I Kings 19: 8 where the name Horeb seems to be secondary, but “the mountain of God” nevertheless plays a central part. For further details attesting to the name of Horeb cf. Martin Noth, Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien I (1943), p. 29.
Finally, it is difficult to answer the question as to the sphere within which the theme “revelation at Sinai” was adopted into the Pentateuchal tradition. Since we are dealing here with an all-Israelite theme, all possibilities are basically open. There is reason to believe, however, that in this case also the southern tribes contributed to the enrichment of the Pentateuchal tradition. Admittedly, historical developments generally occur in a much less unilinear fashion than would often appear on the basis of scanty information, and therefore one must reckon with all sorts of possibilities. Nevertheless, the fact that the process of Pentateuchal development, after it had reached a certain stage in the circle of the central Palestinian tribes, apparently followed its further course toward the end product transmitted to us among the southern tribes, indicates that the theme “revelation at Sinai” was adopted in the sphere of the latter. For this theme is the latest to be added to the series of the other themes, in spite of the fact that its roots apparently reach back into an especially remote past. This can be deduced from the passages which von Rad has gathered on the subject of the “short historical credo” and its “free adaptations in the cult-lyrics,” in which the other Pentateuchal themes already figure and only the theme “revelation at Sinai” is missing. Further evidence for this lies in the fact that the nucleus of this theme was inserted between elements of the theme “guidance in the wilderness,” a theme which itself was added to the series of Pentateuchal themes among the southern tribes. Finally, it must be stressed explicitly that these are not conclusive arguments, but that here one can speak only in terms of a certain probability.

In conclusion, a minimum of narrative material was included within each of the themes out of which the imposing work of the Pentateuchal narrative was created. This is true to the extent that the theme was not only meant to be recited in a confessional manner, purely as theme, in the context of a hymnic formulation determined by cultic use, but was meant to be narrated in a manner which would communicate an event concretely and vividly and arouse participation and interest. This narrative material provided a simple presentation of the theme, the content of which in each case was not an abstract statement but the communication of an event. To this indispensable fund of narrative themes, however, there were easily added, in the course of continual telling and hearing, all sorts of enriching supplements. These supplements were based on the most varied individual traditions and complexes of tradition, which seemed to belong substantively to this or that theme, as well as on the conceptions and interests prevailing in the circle within which the expansion was made. The basic materials and the supplements cannot always be distinguished clearly; but on the whole, these things can be kept apart to some extent for an understanding of the formation of the Pentateuchal narrative.

The concern here is not the manner and history of the art of narration but rather the traditio-historical aspect of the formation of the Pentateuchal narrative. Therefore, in this context we shall not inquire into the universal narrative schemes and motifs which have given shape and color to the individual Pentateuchal narratives. These schemes and motifs were at the disposal of expert and versatile narrators for their recitals, and listeners responded to the special uses of these familiar elements with fresh approval and enthusiasm, even though they appeared again and again in different contexts. Such schemes and motifs were derived from the wealth of ideas and views of ordinary people, who entered vigorously and personally into the events of daily living, and who visualized concretely how the small, more or less commonplace routine of their own life and of the life of beings and things around them usually proceeded, or how it really was supposed to proceed in their opinion. That which was great and unique in history was not grasped as such within this kind of conceptual world. It was of interest only insofar as it contained immediately accessible aspects of the everyday life of man and his world which could appear again and again and were always found in the present situation.

Here we are dealing with the interplay of the various relationships between people, such as love and hatred, loyalty and falsehood, magnanimity and selfishness, helpfulness and treachery; with the relationship of a husband to a beloved and to an unloved wife, of parents to their favorite and to their neglected children, of the master to his faithful or his unfaithful slave—in short, with every possible relation within the limited circle of family and household; in addition, with scenes from the idyllic realm such as the first