

Some issues to consider in engaging the Jacob story (Genesis 25.19-35.29)

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE REST OF GENESIS

Same or different author(s) from Primeval History and Abraham/Sarah cycle?

One or multiple authors/perspectives within the story itself?

TIME/PLACE OF COMPOSITION/EDITING

8th century BCE: Israel, within time of struggle between Israel and Edom [Esau]/Aram [Laban]

6th century BCE: Babylon, during Babylonian exile (Laban as “Mesopotamian”; “gate of heaven”/Babylon)

5th century BCE: Jerusalem, during post-exilic, Persian control of “Yehud” (as “Israelite” expression of relationship with Jerusalem/foreign empires; question of “Judah” perspective added to “original” Israel perspective)

RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER PARTS OF THE BIBLE

Exodus: Jacob as transitional link

Deuteronomistic History: close connections with 1-2 Samuel, but chicken/egg question of which influences which [Note “*religion of creation*” vs. “*religion of empire*” factors]

Prophetic texts such as Hosea 12

READING “LEVELS”

Personal: the immediate story of Isaac’s and Rebekah’s children

(Inter)national: Jacob as Israel, Esau as Edom, Laban as Aram or Babylon

Intertextual: engagement with other parts of the Hebrew Bible (such as the monarchy story)

ETHICS/MORALITY: WHICH SOURCES BY WHICH TO JUDGE THE CHARACTERS’ ACTIONS?

Genesis alone?

Torah?

Prophets?

Interpreter’s personal views (Jewish, Christian, other)?

Today’s Western standards (individualism, feminism)?

Mentions of “Jacob” outside Genesis in the Bible (170 times)

Exodus: 11

Leviticus: 1

Numbers: 9

Deuteronomy: 12

Joshua: 2

1 Samuel: 1

2 Samuel: 1

Kings: 3

Chronicles: 2

Isaiah: 42

Jeremiah: 16

Lamentations: 3

Ezekiel: 4

Hosea: 3

Amos: 6

Obadiah: 3

Micah: 10

Malachi: 3

Psalms: 34

Matthew: 3

Mark: 1

Luke: 4

John: 3

Acts: 7

Romans: 2

Hebrews: 3

Note: 19 of these are the phrase, “Abraham, Isaac and Jacob”

69 have “Jacob” as equivalent to “Israel”