

# Chiasmus in the Book of Genesis

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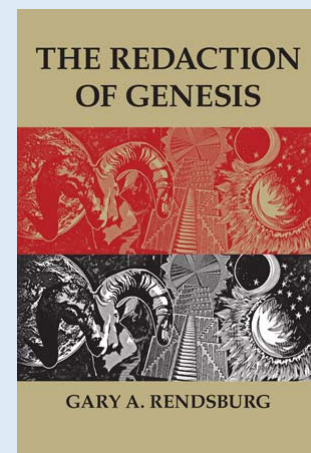
CHIASMUS: AN OPEN CONFERENCE ON THE STATE OF THE ART

August 15–16, 2017

Brigham Young University

## The Abraham Cycle (chs. 12–22) – Part One

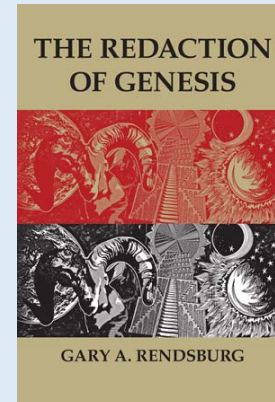
- A Genealogy of Terah (11:27–32)
- B Start of Abram's Spiritual Odyssey (12:1–9)
- C Sarai in foreign palace; ordeal ends in peace and success;  
Abram and Lot part (12:1–13:18)
- D Abram comes to the rescue of Sodom and Lot (14:1–24)
- E Covenant with Abram; Annunciation of Ishmael (15:1–16:16)



***Focal Point: 17:1–5: Abram > Abraham | Elohim introduced | covenant***

## The Abraham Cycle (chs. 12–22) – Part Two

- E' Covenant with Abraham; Annunciation of Isaac (17:1–18:15)
- D' Abraham comes to the rescue of Sodom and Lot (18:16–19:38)
- C' Sarah in foreign palace; ordeal ends in peace and success;  
Abraham and Ishmael part (20:1–21:34)
- B' Climax of Abraham's Spiritual Odyssey (22:1–19)
- A' Genealogy of Nahor (22:20–24)



## Abraham Cycle: B and B'

1. 12:1–9 God speaks to Abram for the first time  
22:1–19 God speaks to Abraham for the final time
2. 12:1 לֵךְ-לֵךְ *lek leka* 'go forth'  
22:2 לֵךְ-לֵךְ *lek leka* 'go forth'
3. 12:1 'to the land that I will show you'  
22:2 'to the land of Moriah . . . which I will point-out to you'
4. 12:1 'from **your** land, and from **your** birthplace,  
and from the house of **your** father'  
22:2 '**your** son, **your** favorite, whom **you** love, Isaac'



C.U.L. T-S A1.13 folio 1v,  
with Genesis 12:1-5

### Abraham Cycle: B and B'

- 5. 12:6 Abram's journey takes him to the terebinth of **Moreh**
- 22:2 Abraham's journey takes him to the land of **Moriah**
- 6. 12:7 'And he built there an altar to YHWH'
- 22:9 'And Abraham built there the altar'
- 7. 12:3 'And all the families of the earth shall be blessed through you'
- 22:18 'And all the nations of the earth shall be blessed through your seed'
- 8. 12:6 'the place of Shechem' (*meqom šekem*)
- 22:6 / 22:3 'the place' (*maqom*) + 'and he arose' (*wayyeškem*)

### Abraham Cycle: B and B'

- 9. 12:7 'and YHWH appeared to Abram' ...
- 'to YHWH who appeared to him'
- 22:14 'YHWH of Appearance' (*YHWH-yir'eh*) ...
- 'on the mount of YHWH who appeared'
- 10. 22:9 Abram journeys to the Negev
- 22:19 Abraham journeys to Beer-sheva
- 11. 12:1-9 story unfolds in two stages
- 22:1-19 story unfolds in two stages (see v. 15 *šenit*)
- 12. 12:8 וַיֵּתֶק *wayya'teq* 'and he proceeded'
- 22:9 וַיַּעֲקֹד *wayya'aqod* 'and he bound'



C.U.L. T-S A1.61 folio 1r,  
with Genesis 22:17-23:5

**Documentary Hypothesis (JEDP Theory) regarding Genesis 12 and 22**

A Genesis 12:1–9 assigned to ‘J’

A’ Genesis 22:1–19 assigned to ‘E’

**Genesis 22:15–18 – a secondary addition**

Robert Davidson (1979): “These verses are an appendix to the main narrative, somewhat artificially joined to it by claiming that the angel of the Lord spoke to Abraham *a second time* (verse 15).”

Gerhard von Rad (1961): “It is clearly noticeable that the narrative once concluded with v. 14.”

**Genesis 22:15–18 – a secondary addition (not so)**

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- 22:18 ‘And all the nations of the earth shall be blessed through your seed’
- 10. 22:9 Abram journeys to the Negev
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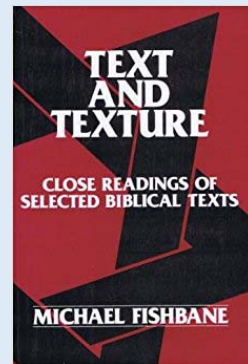
C.U.L. T-S A1.61 folio 1r, with Genesis 22:17-23:5

## Miscellaneous Material after the Abraham Cycle (23:1–25:18)

- Death and Burial of Sarah
- Obtaining a Bride for Isaac
- Death and Burial of Abraham
- Ishmael's Sons

## The Jacob Cycle (chs. 25–35) – Part One

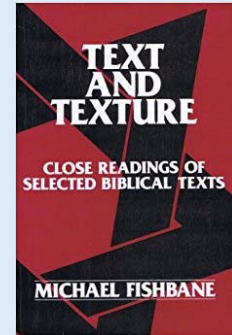
- A Oracle sought, struggle in childbirth, Jacob born (25:19–34)
- B Interlude: Rebekah in foreign palace, pact with foreigners (26:1–34)
- C Jacob fears Esau and flees (27:1–28:9)
- D Messengers (28:10–22)
- E Arrival at Haran (29:1–30)
- F Jacob's wives are fertile (29:31–30:24)



***Focal point: 30:22–25: Rachel gives birth, Jacob decides to return to Canaan***

**The Jacob Cycle (chs. 25–35) – Part Two**

- F' Jacob's flocks are fertile (30:25–43)
- E' Flight from Haran (31:1–54)
- D' Messengers (32:1–32)
- C' Jacob returns and fears Esau (33:1–20)
- B' Interlude: Dinah in foreign palace, pact with foreigners (34:1–31)
- A' Oracle fulfilled, struggle in childbirth, Jacob becomes Israel (35:1–22)



**Jacob Cycle: C and C'**

- |    |          |   |
|----|----------|---|
| 1. | 27:18–29 | Jacob deceives Isaac (and Esau)                     |
|    | 33:1–2   | Jacob plans to deceive Esau                         |
| 2. | 27:41–45 | Jacob fears Esau                                    |
|    | 33:1–8   | Jacob fears Esau                                    |
| 3. | 28:5     | Jacob flees Canaan                                  |
|    | 33:18    | Jacob returns to Canaan                             |
| 4. | 27:18–29 | Jacob steals the <i>beraka</i> 'blessing' from Esau |
|    | 33:11    | Jacob presents Esau with a <i>beraka</i> 'gift'     |



C.U.L. T-S A1.55 2v,  
including  
Genesis 27:1-12

### Jacob Cycle: C and C'

- |    |              |   |
|----|--------------|---|
| 5. | 27:26–27     | Isaac kisses Jacob (~ Esau)                                     |
|    | 33:4         | Esau kisses Jacob   |
| 6. | 27:10, 27:14 | Jacob brings good things to Isaac                               |
|    | 33:11        | Jacob brings good things to Esau                                |
| 7. | 27:21–27     | Verbal root <i>n-g-š</i> 'approach, come near, bring near' (6x) |
|    | 33:6–7       | Verbal root <i>n-g-š</i> 'approach, come near, bring near' (3x) |



C.U.L. T-S A21.23 folio 1r,  
with Genesis 27:22-28

### Jacob Cycle: C and C'

- |     |              |   |
|-----|--------------|---|
| 8.  | 27:11        | Jacob tells Rebekah that his brother Esau is <i>śa'ir</i> 'hairy' |
|     | 27:23        | Jacob's hands were <i>śe'ivot</i> 'hairy', like Esau's            |
|     | 33:14, 33:16 | Esau travels <i>śe'ira</i> 'to Seir' (land of Edom)               |
| 9.  | 27:28        | Jacob will receive <i>rov</i> 'abundance'                         |
|     | 33:9         | Esau informs Jacob that he is <i>rav</i> 'abundant'               |
| 10. | 27:29        | Jacob's brothers 'will bow down' to him                           |
|     | 33:3         | Jacob 'bows down' to Esau   |



C.U.L. T-S A22.25 fol. 1r,  
with Genesis 33:10-14

### Jacob Cycle: C and C'

- |     |       |   |
|-----|-------|---|
| 11. | 27:40 | Esau will throw of the yoke 'from your neck'                                |
|     | 33:4  | Esau 'fell upon his [sc. Jacob's] neck'                                     |
| 12. | 27:38 | 'And he [sc. Esau] cried'   |
|     | 33:4  | 'And they [sc. Jacob and Esau] cried'                                       |
| 13. | C     | two individuals present in each scene,<br>but never Jacob and Esau together |
|     | C'    | Jacob and Esau meet   |



C.U.L. T-S A21.56 folio 2v,  
with Genesis 33:1-5

### Doublets in C and C'

Two reasons why Jacob fled

- Esau's anger (27:41–45)
- Isaac and Rebekah's desire that he not marry a Canaanite (28:1–5)

Two re-entry points for Jacob

- Succoth (33:17)
- Shechem (33:18)





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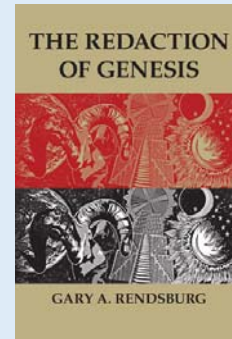


## Miscellaneous Material after the Jacob Cycle (35:23–36:43)

- Death and Burial of Isaac
- Marriages of Esau
- Esau's Sons

### The Joseph Story (chs. 37–50) – Part One

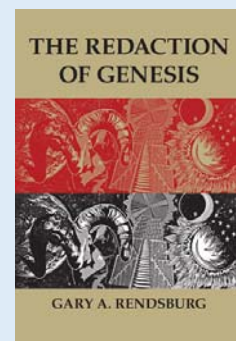
- A Joseph and his brother, Jacob and Joseph part (37:1–36)
- B Interlude: Joseph not present (38:1–30)
- C Reversal: Joseph guilty,  
Potiphar's wife innocent (39:1–23)
- D Joseph hero of Egypt (40:1–41:57)
- E Two trips to Egypt (42:1–43:34)
- F Final test (44:1–34)



***Focal point: 45:1–4: Joseph reveals himself to his brothers***

### The Joseph Story (chs. 37–50) – Part Two

- F' Conclusion of test (45:1–28)
- E' Two tellings of migration to Egypt (46:1–47:12)
- D' Joseph hero of Egypt (47:13–27)
- C' Reversal: Ephraim first-born,  
Manasseh second-born (47:28–48:22)
- B' Interlude: Joseph nominally present (49:1–28)
- A' Joseph and his brothers, Jacob and Joseph part (49:29–50:26)



## Joseph Story: C and C'

1. Reversal: Joseph guilty, Potiphar's Wife innocent  
 Reversal: Ephraim first-born, Manasseh second-born
2. Joseph's superior (Potiphar) responsible for the reversal  
 Joseph's superior (Jacob) responsible for the reversal
3. 39:7 Action centers around the bed:  
 implicit in C: 'lie with me'  
 47:31 Action centers around the bed:  
 explicit in C': *mitṭa* 'bed'



C.U.L. T-S A1.43 folio 1v,  
 containing most of Gen 39

## Joseph Story: C and C'

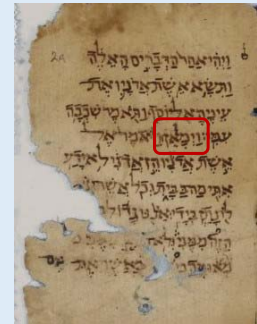
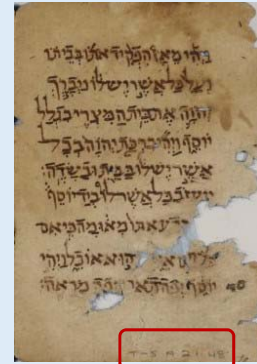
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C.U.L. T-S A1.43 folio 1v,  
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### Joseph Story: C and C'

4. Verbal root *b-r-k* 'bless' – 39:5 (2x)  
Verbal root *b-r-k* 'bless' – 48:3, 48:9, 48:15,  
48:16, 48:20 (2x)
5. 39:8 'and he resisted and said' (Joseph)  
48:19 'and his father resisted and said' (Jacob)
6. 39:4 'and Joseph found favor in his  
[sc. Potiphar's] eyes'  
47:29 'if I [sc. Jacob] have found favor in your  
[sc. Joseph] eyes'
7. 39:21 *ḥesed* 'favor, kindness'  
47:29 *ḥesed* 'favor, kindness'



### Joseph Story: C and C'

8. 39:7-14 Verbal root *š-k-b* 'lie' (4x)  
47:30 Verbal root *š-k-b* 'lie'
9. Noun *yad* 'hand' – used 9x in C  
Noun *yad* 'hand' – used 4x in C'
10. 39:6 *leḥem* 'bread'  
(though figuratively 'wife')  
48:7 *bet leḥem* 'Beth-lehem'  
(lit. 'house of bread')



C.U.L. T-S A21.152 1r,  
fragment containing  
Gen 39:20-22

### A textual problem in Genesis 48:7

Scholars have questioned the gloss in 48:7:

וְאֶקְבְּרָהָ שָׁם בְּדֶרֶךְ אֶפְרַת הִוא בֵּית לֶחֶם:

‘And I buried her there, on the road to Ephrath,  
which is Beth-lehem’

After all, how could Jacob speak in such way,  
glossing a toponym with another name?

Hence, a later scribe must have added  
‘which is Beth-lehem’.



Lewis-Gibson (Westminster)  
1.93 verso  
Genesis 48:3–16

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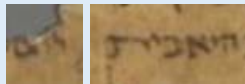
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Lewis-Gibson (Westminster)  
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Genesis 48:3–16

### A (so-called) textual problem in Genesis 48:7

But I would argue that the term is integral to the narrative.

Contemporary scholars too often impose their own ‘logic’ on the ancient text, instead of letting the ‘narrative logic’ of the Hebrew composition speak for itself.

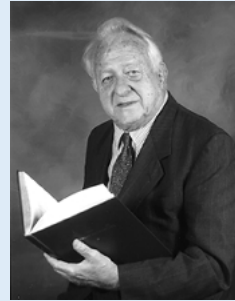
The words ‘which is Beth-lehem’ are necessary, in order to create another nexus between C and C’.

Moreover, 39:6 is ‘J’ (like all of ch. 39), while 48:7 is ‘P’, according to the source critics.

In the words of my teacher Cyrus Gordon:

He never would say that such-and-such scholar was wrong, but rather he divided scholars into two types:

“There are those who catch on fast, while others take more time.”



Cyrus H. Gordon  
(1908 – 2001)

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