

*The Northern Patriarchs*

*No resident people ever made a myth of themselves as coming from outside. The Hebrews have not one, but two such myths: one of a peaceful entry from the north, and one of a warlike entry from the south. Following the Canaanite origin stories in Gen 1-10 (and the first part of Gen 11), Gen 11b-16 will deal with the Patriarchs, the intruders from the north. A great effort was later made to link these stories with the those of the intruders from the south. That effort is already visible in some of these stories.*

(11) Abram from Haran, far to the northeast, leads his herd into Canaan. After various wanderings, he purchases a field for a burial ground. He is then renamed Abraham, to make him a fitting forefather for later multitudes.

(12) Melchizedek. This is the most baffling chapter in the Bible: it cannot be accommodated in the 4DH system. It presents a second, and incompatible, and clearly *earlier*, story of how Lot was rescued from the city of Sodom.

(13) Isaac is the second of the Three Patriarchs, the only one who is not renamed during the course of the story. Narratively speaking, he is barely there. The most amusing thing about him is his deception by his son Jacob, who steals the paternal blessing that properly belongs to his older brother Esau.

(14) With Jacob (renamed “Israel”), northern tradition is linked to southern tradition. His sons are supposed to be the origin of the Twelve Tribes (§39).

(15) The Joseph Story. This very late and very long story was added to show how the family of Jacob went to Egypt in search of food, and remained there.

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*The next instalment of the Promise Narrative will be taken up in Exodus, and there we will meet the enigmatic leader and lawgiver Moses. We will also meet Aaron, nominally his brother, later regarded as the ancestor of all priests. Above all, we will officially meet Yahweh, the god of the pastoral Hebrews, whose ritual center was at Midian – also the probable original home of Moses. Which of these conflicting details is earlier than the others?*

*That is the question which this book consistently asks. Not that it can always be answered, and some ancient things are undoubtedly lost beyond recovery. But even a partial answer can lead to better understanding of what remains.*