A Structural Analysis of Genealogy and Worldview in the Old Testament

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The structural pattern inherent in the genealogy of the Old Testament is delineated (I). Correlating this structural pattern with the worldview of Ancient Israel, it is hypothesized that the genealogy functions as a model for the resolution of certain conflicts within the worldview (II). Finally, an analysis of the Jacob narration demonstrates the structural isomorphism of genealogy and individual case (III).

INDICATING INTEREST in Old Testament genealogy unleashes a fairly conditioned response, even among fellow anthropologists: "Adam begat Seth and Seth begat Enos who begat . . . " Yet, begetting does not only establish phenotypes. Underlying each phenotype there is a genotype. Underlying the genealogical lists of the Old Testament there might be a structural pattern. And that the Old Testament is an opulent hunting ground for structural considerations has been demonstrated by Mary Douglas (1966) and Edmund Leach (1967, 1969).

This article intends to delineate the structural pattern inherent in the genealogy of the Old Testament. Furthermore, it will be hypothesized that this descent structure provides a model for the resolution of conflict in the worldview of Ancient Israel.

I

Old Testament genealogy can be conceptualized as manifesting the interplay of three processes. These processes will first be analyzed separately, after which the logical interrelationships which integrate them into a structure of descent will be delineated.

Preceding this analysis, a terminological clarification might be in order. In the context of this paper, the term "Jewish" is

used as a descent-oriented label; it refers to every individual identified by the genealogy as an ancestor of the people of Israel. "Israel," of course, refers exclusively to Ancient Israel.

Adam, the first man, is ancestor to the people of Israel through his son Seth. Through a number of other sons, he is ancestor to other peoples as well. This multiple role is not confined to Adam but is encountered as a rule in each generation from Adam to Jacob. Each ancestor in the Jewish descent line is the father of non-Jewish sons as well. The non-Jewish sons are declared the ancestors of various peoples who populated the known world. Non-Jewish ancestors diverge from the Jewish descent line, and by this process of divergence a map of the world population is established. Since divergence proceeds in generational sequence, it provides for a differentiated degree of kinship among the peoples of the world and between them and Israel. The map of the world population is thus a relational map in which the degree of kinship is meant to reflect the assumed relationship among the known peoples of the world based upon geographic, historic, political, linguistic, and ethnic considerations.

The relational map of the world population generated by the process of divergence is illustrated by Figure 1 and detailed in the subsequent paragraphs. The genealogy pre-
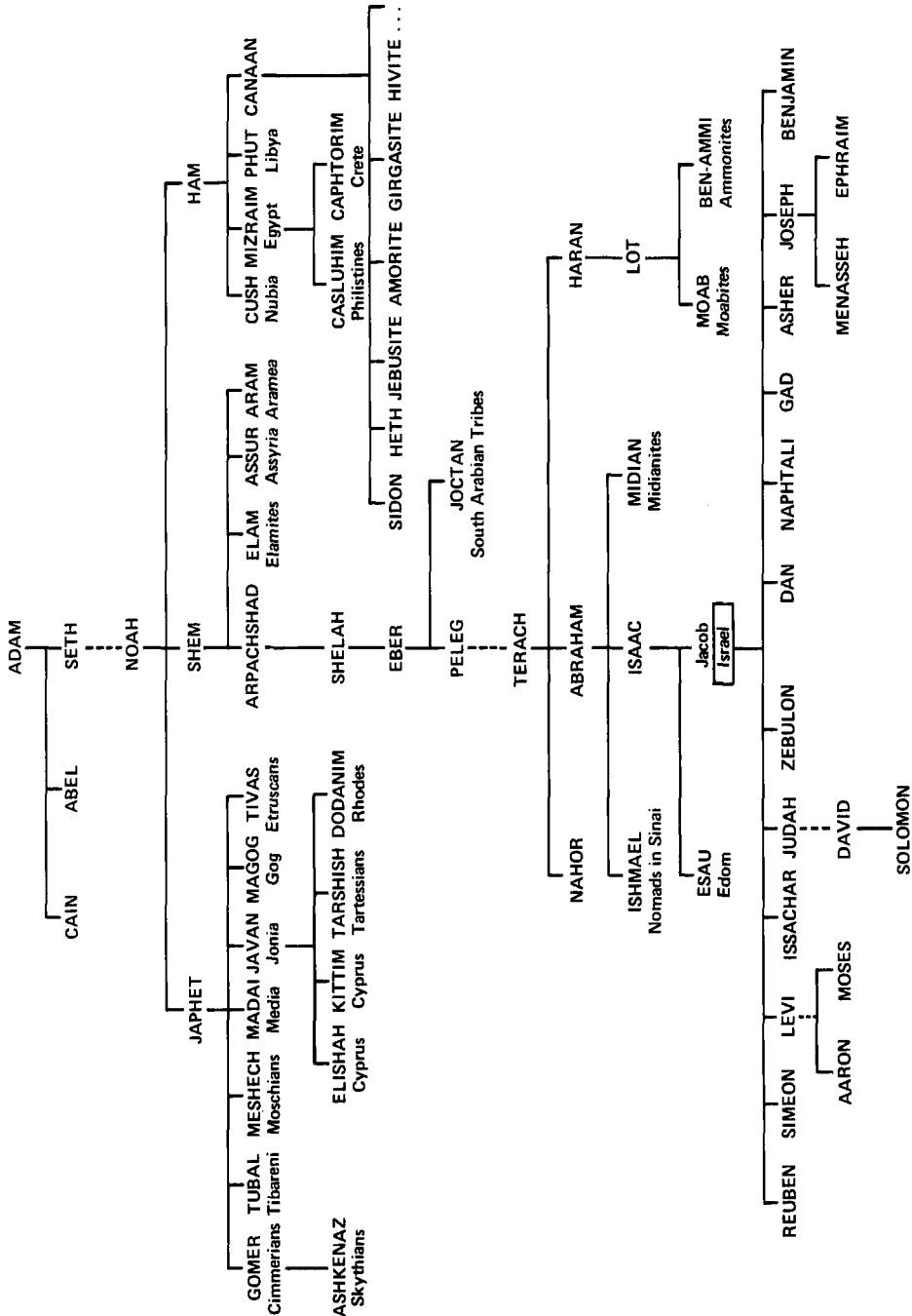
Figure 1. Old Testament genealogy and the peoples of the world.

sented is not complete, but focuses upon names whose correspondence with peoples or countries is well established by scholarly agreement.

Since the flood annihilated the primordial peoples, Noah's sons Shem, Ham, and Japhet set in motion the repopulation of the earth.

The sons of Ham are Cush, Mizraim, Phut, and Canaan. The terms "Cush" and "Phut" appear in Egyptian sources and are identified by scholars with Nubia and Libya respectively; "Mizraim" is the Hebrew name for Egypt. The names of Canaan's sons are identical to the various city-states which existed in Canaan. Mizraim's son Casluhim is the ancestor of the Philistines; his brother Caphtorim is the ancestor of the inhabitants of Crete (*Views of the Biblical World* 1959:39; May 1962:54-55). Thus, Ham's descendants cover the Southeast of the Mediterranean or, in political terms, areas predominantly under Egyptian influence.

Japhet's descendants cover the areas North of Palestine: Gomer, Tubal, and Meshech are the ancestors of Anatolian peoples—the Cimmerians, the Tibareni, and the Moschians. Madai is identified with Media, Javan with Jonia, and Magog with the Armenian kingdom of Gog mentioned in the Tell Amarna letters. Tivas is identified with the Tursha, also mentioned in Egyptian documents as members of a sea-confederacy, some of whom held several Aegean islands and some of whom became the Etruscans. Gomer's son Ashkenaz becomes the ancestor of the Scythians, Javan's sons Elishah and Kittim are related to the inhabitants of Cyprus, Tarshish is related to the Tartessians of Southern Spain, and Dodanim, spelled in the Chronicles as Rodanim, is related to Rhodes (Graves and Patai 1966:124).

Shem's son Arpachshad carries on the Jewish lineage, while his brothers Elam, Ashur, and Aram become the ancestors of peoples located in Mesopotamia: the Elamites, the Assyrians, and the Aramaeans (*Views of the Biblical World* 1959:43). These Mesopotamian peoples are one generation closer to Israel than are the descendants of Ham and Japhet. This genealogical assump-

tion coincides with the standard archaeological theory, which lists the Habiru among the historic ancestors of Israel. The Habiru, it is believed, entered Canaan from the North, possibly Mesopotamia (Albright 1963; Kenyon 1960). Finally, the nomads of the Sinai peninsula and the mini-kingdoms on the borders of Israel (Moab, Ammon, Midian, and Edom) are designated as the closest relatives of Israel through their descent from Terach and his son Abraham (May 1962:57).

Thus, briefly restated, Ham and Japhet diverge from the Jewish descent line. They cleave the known world into two sectors: the Southeastern Mediterranean, populated by the descendants of Ham, and the Northern Mediterranean, populated by the descendants of Japhet. The third brother, Shem, continues the Jewish lineage and subsequent divergence allocates an increasing degree of kin relationship with Israel to a number of Mesopotamian peoples, to the nomads of Arabia and Sinai, and to a number of small city-states neighboring Israel.

In addition to this relational map of the world population generated by the process of divergence, the Old Testament provides specific clues to account for some of the traditional enemies of Israel. As is customary in those segments of myth which provide a charter for socio-political situations and attitudes (Malinowski 1954:144), an ancestor is at fault when his descendants are viewed with suspicion and contempt and, eventually, must be defeated. Being no exception to Malinowski's rule, the Old Testament provides this kind of underpinning for the animosity against the Philistines, the peoples of Canaan and Egypt (descendants of Ham), against Moab and Ammon (descendants of Lot), and against Edom (descendants of Esau).

Ham earns his father's curse in the famous and cryptic passage referring to Noah's hapless experience with wine. Noah falls into a drunken sleep and Ham "saw the nakedness of his father," which is quickly covered by his brothers. However, "Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his

younger son had done unto him." Cursing Ham and his descendants, his anger culminates in the phrase: "Canaan shall be a servant to his brothers" (Gen 9:20-27).[1] This curse seems incommensurate with the act committed unless we assume, as some scholars have done, that there is more behind the story than meets the eye, that there is some gap in the narration where information was lost. "To uncover somebody's nakedness" is a customary Biblical metaphor for incest (Lev 18; Patai 1959). A substantial curse would be justified in such a case. Yet, some Midrashic commentators and Biblical scholars have gone one more step and read "castration of the father" in the passage (Ginzberg 1909:168-169; Graves and Patai 1966:122). Whatever Ham did—homosexual incest, or castration, or both—he earned himself a well-documented curse. And the descendants of the better brother Shem inherited a number of patent enemies.

Moab and Ammon are likewise in a precarious position with respect to their parents' morality. Their father Lot has a wife and two daughters while he resides in Sodom. After their escape from the flaming city, Lot's wife turns around and is transformed into a pillar of salt. Thus, she fulfills her mission for the School of Comparative Mythology by providing another instance of the frequently occurring motif turn-around-and-everything-is-lost and finds herself in the good company of Orpheus (Gaster 1969:159-160). Yet, in so doing, she leaves a husband and two daughters in despair regarding the question of procreation. The daughters finally decide to solve the problem within the family. They coax their father into drunkenness and each extracts an heir from him, Moab and Ben Ammi. Their descendants have to pay the bill (Gen 19:24-38).

As for Esau, the ancestor of Edom, his actions are not quite so dramatic. Rather, he exhibits a number of small character weaknesses which accumulate over time. He marries the wrong kind of women; in a time where everybody who is somebody marries endogamously, he weds two Hittite women.

He has a bit of a violent inclination, he is hyperactive, and apparently not familiar with the art of delaying gratification for long-range goals (Gen 25:24-34, 26:34-35).

In concurrent contrast with the process of divergence is a second process, for which the label "invergence" may be coined. While the peoples of the world establish themselves through continual branching, the Jewish lineage remains a straight line in all generations from Adam to Jacob. In each generation only one son continues the Jewish lineage. This raises the question whether the selection of the son is governed by any system.

One possible system could be based on the rule of primogeniture. And throughout the Old Testament the special status of the firstborn is emphasized. As Vaux (1961:41-42) concludes:

> Among the sons, the eldest enjoyed certain privileges. During his father's lifetime, he took precedence over his brothers (Gen 43: 33). On his father's death he received a double share of the inheritance (Dt 21: 17) and became the head of the family . . . The eldest could lose his right of primogeniture for a grave offence . . . but (he) was protected by law against favouritism on the part of his father (Dt 21: 15-17).

Recognition of the firstborn's superior status is likewise apparent when God commands Moses to say to Pharaoh: "Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn" (Ex 4:22).

In the Jewish descent line, firstborns are numerically well represented. In the generations between Seth and Abraham it is implied that all of these ancestors were firstborns. For all of them a phrase like the following one is used: And A lived x years and begat B; and A lived y years after he begat B and begat sons and daughters (Gen 4, 11). Yet, all those firstborn sons are listed by name and status only, they do not figure as heroes of stories.

All the remaining ancestors, however, are distinguished on two accounts. Their adventures constitute the narrative content of the Book of Genesis and their birth status eclip-

ses the prevalence of primogeniture. The heroes of stories are, almost without exception, younger brothers. Noah is the only ancestor-hero who seems to be a firstborn. Seth, Isaac, and Jacob are unquestionably younger brothers, while the status of Abraham is somewhat ambiguous.

Seth is the youngest son of Adam, born after the killing of his brother Abel. Himself not the hero of a story, he is conceived by his mother as a replacement for Abel; "For God, said she, has appointed me another son instead of Abel, whom Cain slew" (Gen 4:25). Thus, he partakes in the adventures of Abel, who himself was younger than Cain.

Abraham's firstborn is Ishmael, the son of Hagar, Sarah's handmaid (Gen 16). The son of a handmaid, however, could be recognized as an equal to the son of a wife, a recognition imbedded in the following custom. In case of barrenness, a wife would give her handmaid to her husband. As comparisons with the Code of Hammurabi and with the Nuzi tablets suggest, she was probably required by law to do so. The handmaid gave birth on her mistress' knees, by which her stand-in role was symbolized, and the child was adopted by the mistress. Even if the wife's barrenness proved to be of a temporary nature, the handmaid's child was not lowered in status. The relations among the sons of Jacob, some of whom were born to him by his wives' handmaids, amply demonstrate that their mothers' social position did not cause discrimination among them. This is why Sarah, when finally giving birth to Isaac, is so anxious to remove Hagar and her firstborn son. The text leaves no doubt that the manner in which Ishmael is treated is in conflict with prevailing custom (Vaux 1961:51, 53; Patai 1959:41-42). Nevertheless, the younger Isaac becomes the next ancestor.

In the story of the twins Jacob and Esau, it is the latter who is born first. As is customary in the case of twins, the one who emerges first has the right of the firstborn (Vaux 1961:41). This right is never questioned in Esau's family, until Jacob moves to upset the prevailing order.

The position of Abraham is ambiguous. In listing Terach's sons, Abraham is mentioned first. Yet, one could submit the following considerations in support of the contention that his brother Nahor is the firstborn. Nahor bears his paternal grandfather's name. The custom of naming the firstborn son after the paternal grandfather, still found in the Middle East, may well have existed in Ancient Israel (Graves and Patai 1966:133). When Terach leaves Ur, Abraham and Haran's son Lot (Haran himself has died meanwhile) accompany him. Nahor, however, stays behind, an act which becomes meaningful if we assume him to be the firstborn. In this case he would inherit a major portion of his father's property and remains behind to take care of it (Gen 11:13).

Tangential to the process of invergence is the following consideration: invergence comes to an end in the generation of Jacob's sons, yet the notion of the younger brother as achieving special status prevails. This status, consequently, is not defined anymore by continuing the Jewish lineage, but by becoming a leader of the people of Israel or an ancestor to such a leading figure. Joseph, who starts the migration to Egypt and arranges a comfortable stay for his family there, is a younger brother (Gen 30). When Joseph's sons Menasseh and Ephraim are blessed by their grandfather Jacob, he intentionally allocates the firstborn's blessing to the younger Ephraim, whose descendant Joshua will lead the conquest of Canaan (Gen 48:13-20). Saul, Israel's first king, is a descendant of Benjamin, the youngest of Jacob's sons (1 Sam 9:1-2). Moses is younger than Aaron, and Aaron only plays a supporting role in the exodus (1 Ch 6:3). David and Solomon are both younger sons (1 Ch 2:13-15, 3:1-5). Finally, there is an interesting incident in the descent line leading from Judah to David. Judah's daughter-in-law, Tamar, after an unsuccessful marriage and levirate, still determined to stay in the family, disguises herself as a prostitute and conceives twins from Judah. The behavior of these twins is reminiscent of the Esau and Jacob competition. However, the younger twin re-

acts faster than did his ancestor Jacob and decides matters while still in the womb. When the first twin is on his way out and given a red ribbon on his protruding hand by the midwife, this hand is suddenly pulled back and out comes the other fellow. And this other fellow becomes the ancestor of David (Gen 38).

The cases of younger brothers who continue the Jewish lineage, or who become leading figures for Israel, were certainly noted and considered significant (Baron 1937:22; Patai 1959:220; Vaux 1961:42). They are too numerous to be considered mere exceptions to the rule of primogeniture. Furthermore, all the younger brothers are "interesting," are the heroes of stories—as opposed to the firstborn ancestors—and thus attributed special weight and consideration. Rather than presenting an exception to the rule of primogeniture, the younger brothers seem to exemplify a valid alternative by which the status of a Jewish ancestor can be assumed. Status, in its elementary alternatives, may be either ascribed or achieved. Ascribed status is a deterministic result, while achieved status derives from the opposite of determinism, the possibility of choice. Given the rule of primogeniture, the firstborn sons become Jewish ancestors by determinism, while the younger sons achieve progenitor status by denying determinism, thus representing the element of choice. The Old Testament documents both, determinism and choice, as governing the process of invergence. Yet, choice seems to carry more weight than determinism, since the cases of the younger brothers are emphasized by narrative elaborations.

Divergence and invergence work concurrently until the generation of Jacob. While they come to a closure in the subsequent generation, a process of segmentation is introduced. Jacob has twelve sons, all of whom transmit Jewish descent by being declared ancestors of the twelve tribes. Within a single generation, the Jewish lineage segments into twelve sub-units. Two significant modalities are thus proposed. First, by establishing all sub-units within a single genera-

tion, no seniority claims are given foundation, as would be the case in a "spinal cord method of segmentation" (Fox 1967:125). Rather, equal positions are attributed to the sub-units. Second, since the twelve tribes are a synonym for the Jewish people, their origin manifests the nucleus of the Jewish people. Segmentation, thus, transforms the Jewish lineage into the Jewish people.

Symbolisms on different levels seem to accentuate this transformation from the lineage to the people. First, on the occasion of his nocturnal fight with God, Jacob receives the new name "Israel" (Gen 32:28). His children, thus, become the "children of Israel," the official name for the people. Second, the transition from the lineage to the people involves a geographic relocation. The Jacob narration leads into the adventures of Joseph, providing a rationale for the brothers' sojourn in Egypt. Their descendants remain there until Moses leads the exodus. The segmenting lineage leaves Canaan, disappearing in Egypt, to return again as a people. This is reminiscent of the disappearing-and-reappearing motif which so often figures in myth and initiation ceremonies as a symbol for transition to maturity. As Joseph Campbell points out (1964:137-138), even the symbol of the water or the waterhole as a medium of transition is used in this context. Joseph is thrown into a well from which his journey to Egypt starts; and the people of Israel emerge from Egypt by passing through the Red Sea.

Divergence, invergence, and segmentation generate the descent structure in the Old Testament. Chronologically, divergence and invergence are concurrent through the generations from Adam to Jacob. Upon their suspension in the next generation, segmentation is introduced. The *logical* relationship between each two processes constitutes different types of oppositions.

Divergence and invergence are complementary: each is needed to set off the other. Invergence provides a measuring rod for the differentiated degree of kinship within the diverging system. Divergence, by contrast, exposes the unique consequence of inver-

gence. In their coordination, the two processes establish the unique case within a ranked diversity—the Jewish lineage among the peoples of the world.

Invergence and segmentation are contrary: each can only function in the absence of the other. While invergence operates, the Jewish lineage comprises a single son from each generation; when segmentation commences, the Jewish lineage comprises each son from a single generation. The sequence from invergence to segmentation transforms a singular into a plurality, while maintaining the unity of this plurality as well as the equality of its segments.

Segmentation and divergence both establish diversity. Divergence, however, yields external diversity—the peoples of the world, while segmentation yields internal diversity—the tribes of Israel. The two processes are, therefore, inversions of each other.

The total structure generated by the three processes in their respective oppositions has thus the following properties: the coordination of divergence and invergence establishes the unique case within a ranked diversity, while the sequence from invergence to segmentation establishes equalized diversity within the unique case—an inversion reflecting the relation between divergence and segmentation.

II

The significance of the descent pattern in the Old Testament is not confined to structural aesthetics. This pattern strongly suggests correlation with another aspect of culture—the worldview of ancient Israel. It can be hypothesized that descent functions as a medium of expression and integration for a number of significant elements in Israel's worldview.

This hypothesis is based upon two assumptions, neither of which has to be defended anew. The first assumption refers to the relationship between behavior and idea about behavior. One possible frame of reference for understanding the development of anthropological thinking, as convincingly

demonstrated by Robert Murphy (1971), is the growing awareness that a people's perception of its socio-cultural reality does not reflect this reality neatly. Ideology, as we came to understand from the work of Lévi-Strauss, deviates from socio-cultural reality and its "infrastructure" and often inverts this reality (e.g., 1953, 1966). Since worldview—being a segment of ideology—transfigures reality, it has to manufacture its own integration and the eventual negation of its internal inconsistencies. This raises the question about the kind of tools which might be used for this manufacture.

The second assumption refers to the instrumental role allocated to descent. Within the culture of ancient Israel kinship is still an important factor for the patterning of social interaction. Likewise, within the context of mythology, kinship often functions as a matrix for the perception of origins and history. Enclaves of mythological themes and methods are still present in the Old Testament, although historic consciousness and teleology have alienated it from its mythological sources in the course of a long editorial process.

It is thus understandable that the Old Testament might project the intricacies of a worldview into the familiar medium of descent, and that descent, transcending its function of being a mere reckoning of generations, might be forged into a tool used to resolve certain inconsistencies in the worldview. That worldview and descent actually *do* relate in this way, remains to be demonstrated. In a short sketch, the salient issues of Israel's worldview will be presented within their historic context and then correlated with the descent structure.

The tribal confederacy, which later, around 1000 B.C., was to become the United Monarchy, was composed of ethnically related groups which had come from different places and had a different past. There was no permanent political center. Temporary, situational authority was exercised by the Judges, charismatic leaders, for the purpose of defense. It seems, however, that the confederacy had a cultic-religious bond,

a central sanctuary where the god was venerated who had proven to be their special protector (Albright 1963). The belief in this god had been propagated by those segments of the confederacy, whose history included a sojourn in Egypt. Their deliverance from Egypt and protection in war were attributed to this god. He came to be considered the only god of relevance to the confederacy, the only god to be venerated, although, most probably, he was not considered the only god in existence (Pfeiffer 1961). This religious cohesion, as well as the increasing pressure of the Philistines who had settled on the Canaanite coast, served to tighten the bonds of the confederacy which, eventually, became a monarchy. During the time of the United Monarchy, Israel acquired a considerable degree of national identity which survived the later political division into the kingdoms of Israel and Judah (Baron 1937). Hence, the inclination, or demand, to collect and organize oral tradition into a national epic, the writing of which started in the ninth century B.C. and continued through several centuries (Pfeiffer 1941).

In this national epic, the origin of nationhood is re-extended into the past. The people originates in Egypt and thereafter defines itself in terms of one stream of common history. The deliverance from Egypt and the migration through Sinai, actual memories only to a segment of the population, are expanded into the history of the entire people. The polymorphic participation of the different groups in the conquest of Canaan is reformulated into a homogeneous enterprise whose goal lends purpose to history.

While the writing of the Old Testament continued, while Israel was destroyed by Assyria in 722 B.C., and Judah struggled against political and ideological domination by its neighbors, the prophetic movement was causing considerable changes in Israel's religious ideology. As a consequence of the prophetic movement, the non-exclusive, nationalistic patron god of the confederacy was transformed into a truly monotheistic creator, into a transcendent and moral ruler

of the universe. In adapting to the changing image of God, the idea of the covenant transformed the old, pragmatic relationship between a certain god and his protégé-people into a relationship between the one universal God and the people chosen to exemplify his moral commands (Pfeiffer 1961).

Pursuing the correlation between worldview and descent structure, the ideological components relevant to the process of divergence shall be considered first. Israel's self-awareness as a people and its sense of history was hardly confined to the perception of the self. By necessity, the world around had to be viewed as a world of peoples, each distinguished by its history, yet all related in various degrees through the intersections of their histories. And Israel itself had to assume a place in this network of relationships. The process of divergence transfers this panorama of the world to the domain of descent. Ancestors are allocated to the various known peoples and their degree of kinship rationalizes the historic relations among their descendants.

A second important element in Israel's worldview seems pertinent to the process of divergence. In the view of ancient Israel, the world is neither an autonomous system, nor is it subdivided into the dominions of various gods, but it is intrinsically related to the one and only God. When Israel's image of God had changed from a tribal god among many to the universal ruler, God had to assume responsibility for the entire creation, including, of course, the world population. When he created the first man, as was his mythological duty, the world population had to diverge from this creation.

The process of divergence, thus, generates a descent matrix which is isomorphic to ideological content. The perception of the world molded by Israel's self-consciousness as a people within history, and the notion of God's universal creatorship are reflected in a relational map of the world population.

Israel's self-perception, however, goes beyond a mere sense of location within the world of men. By virtue of the covenant,

Israel views itself as a unique and special people. Its claim to be God's contract partner, the sole representative of his laws, necessitates modification of the descent system—hence, the process of invergence. Within the general branching from the first ancestor which established the world population, Israel's special role has to be marked by contrast. While branching continues, Israel remains a trimmed lineage. Just as there is only one people selected to represent God's law, there can be only one son selected to represent the Jewish lineage in each generation.

Descent and ideology converge even further. In discussing the process of invergence, it was demonstrated that the cases of younger brothers who continue the Jewish lineage represent a selection by choice as opposed to a selection predetermined by primogeniture. Although both alternatives are exemplified in the Old Testament, choice is emphasized through narrative elaboration. The notion of choice is likewise essential to the covenant. Israel is chosen by God to be his contract partner and accepts this choice. Neither was it predetermined to be the representative of God's laws, nor did it accidentally drift into his favor. Choosing the younger son to continue the Jewish lineage might be interpreted as a descent equivalent to the ideology of the covenant. In each generation, the national covenant at Sinai (the choice and acceptance of one people) is paralleled by individual contracts (the choice and acceptance of one son). The phylogenesis, the genesis of the people, is reflected on the individual level as the ontogenesis of the ancestors of the people. The process of invergence generates a lineage continuously trimmed into a straight line, and thus clearly distinguishable from the diverging peoples of the world. This trimming, in turn, is accomplished by emphasizing a viable alternative to the determinism of primogeniture— the choice of the younger brother, a descent equivalent to God's choice of Israel.

The longer invergence is operating within the diverging system, the more emphasis is given to Israel's special role within God's creation. Sooner or later, however, the lineage has to become the people. The demographic situation of the kingdom has to be accounted for as well as its internal heterogeneity. The different groups which assembled in the tribal confederacy still preserved remnants of their traditional affiliation with their land and their distinct past and ancestry. Given the descent frame, however, the consequence of alliance had to be rationalized in terms of filiation; and given the emphasis on invergence, the consequence of fusion had to be rationalized in terms of fission. While the need for segmentation is thus given, the specific type and timing of this segmentation remains to be explained.

The Old Testament selects a type of segmentation by which all sub-units are established within a single generation, thus providing the equality among the sub-units, which characterizes Israel's historic self-perception. The distinctions in the population, which derived from the confederate tribes and their territorial affiliations, and which were partly preserved in the twelve prefectures of Solomon's kingdom (Vaux 1961:133-135), are never viewed as a hierarchic arrangement. Throughout the Old Testament, there is no exclusive concentration of attention on, or significance attributed to, any one tribe. The important leaders come from different tribes: Moses is a descendant of Levi, Joshua a descendant of Ephraim, as is Samuel. Those Judges whose descent is clearly stated come from Benjamin (Jg 3:15), Issachar (Jg 10:1), Menasseh (Jg 10:3, 11:1), Zebulon (Jg 12:11), and Dan (Jg 13:2-24). Although there is a dynastic principle attached to the house of Judah, it never becomes a synonym for the institution of the monarchy. Saul, the first king, is a descendant of Benjamin and, after the split, the kingdom of Israel never really accepts this dynastic principle (Vaux 1961:100).

The timing of the segmentation, immediately preceding the Egypt-experience, seems to be determined by the ideology of the covenant. The people had to exist prior to the exodus to allow for its presence at Sinai

to receive the covenant. During the sojourn in Egypt, population growth extends the segmented lineage into the people. Likewise, if the mythological rebirth motif mentioned previously is no accident, Egypt provides a convenient "other world" for the transition from the lineage to the people.

As became apparent in the previous confrontation, divergence, invergence, and segmentation parallel a number of elements in Israel's worldview, yet they are contrary to the historic reality. In the reality reconstructed by archaeologists, the Jewish people constituted itself through a process of fusion; through alliances, originally diverse groups became a people. In the descent image the Jewish people derives from a process of fission. An original unity, carefully preserved over generations, segments into internal diversity.

In ideologizing reality, descent and worldview are synchronized. Divergence projects a panorama of the world which is created and presided over by a universal God and which is populated by various peoples whose history, location, and ethnicity weave them into a network of relations. Invergence confirms the identity of Israel as a representative of God's laws, chosen by him from among the peoples of the world. Segmentation explains how the homogeneous representative of God's laws grew into the heterogeneous people.

The homology of descent processes and worldview elements might accomplish more than a mere translation from one domain of thought into another. The function of this homology, it seems, is anchored in the fact that the descent processes are integrated into a coherent structure, whereas the corresponding elements of the worldview manifest internal conflict.

Imbedded in Israel's worldview are different manifestations of a conflict between the general and the specific. The universal aspect of God's role confronted with the notion of the covenant, raises the issue whether the God of everyone can be the exclusive God for Israel. Another manifestation of this conflict, observed by Edmund Leach, is "the

historical torment of all religious sects which acquire political ambitions" (1969:39). Rephrasing Leach, who argues in terms of endogamy versus exogamy, this is a conflict between exclusiveness, the requirement for a religious mission, and inclusiveness, the requirement for the political definition of a people. Finally, this conflict resounds in the notion of being clearly separated from the world of peoples, yet at the same time being part of this world.

These ideological ambiguities can be mediated through their descent-symbolization. The structure of descent lends its patterned consistency and provides a model for the resolution of the conflict. By establishing the unique case within the ranked diversity and equalized diversity within the unique case, descent-logic has constructed its own dialectic solution. It declares that the specific and the general are two aspects of the same reality. Or, in other terms, the prescription for consistency, presented by the descent structure to the worldview, reads: Israel has to view itself as the synthesis of the specific and the general, by being specific and homogeneous to the outside, and general and heterogeneous to the inside.

III

The pattern of descent, thus far delineated and interpreted in general terms, will now be reexamined within the context of a special case—the narration of Jacob. According to its location within the general structure of descent, the Jacob narration constitutes the intersection of all three processes and might, therefore, represent the total structure in a nutshell.

Isaac has grown old and blind when the time arrives to allocate his last blessings to his sons Esau and Jacob. Prompted by his mother, the younger Jacob disguises himself as Esau, and tricks his father into granting him the firstborn's blessing. Prior to this incident, Jacob "bought" the firstborn's title from his hungry brother Esau in exchange for a dish of lentils. After receiving the fa-

ther's blessing, Jacob flees in fear of Esau's revenge. On the way, he is granted God's blessing and, finally, arrives at the place of his mother's brother Laban. There he encounters Laban's younger daughter, Rachel, and promptly falls in love with her. She is promised to him in marriage in return for seven years of service. Since the bride is to be heavily veiled, Laban sends his elder daughter, Leah, into matrimony. The wedding tent is dark, the marriage consummated, and not until dawn does Jacob recognize the deceit. Luckily Jacob, however, lived in polygynous times. A week later he is married to Rachel on the condition that he work for another seven years. God grants Leah fertility, while Rachel remains barren. Some time later, one of Leah's sons finds a mandrake (used as an aphrodisiac or fertility drug) and presents it to his mother. Rachel is eager to obtain the plant and does so in trade for her temporary privilege of sleeping with Jacob. Leah uses her opportunity and becomes pregnant once again. When Jacob has worked off his debt, he assembles his household and returns home (Gen 25:21-31:18).

A number of narrative strings join the Jacob-Esau and the Leah-Rachel story. Jacob moves from one story into the other; he is the deceiver in the first, the deceived in the second. Yet, the two narrations feature not merely a diachronic link, but a high degree of structural correspondence as well. The Leah-Rachel story is a symmetric inversion of the Jacob-Esau story. The axis of this inversion is the common theme underlying the two narrations: competition among siblings. Their symmetric inversion derives from two sets of structural congruencies.

The first set of structural congruencies underlies the role behavior of the persons involved. In the Jacob-Esau story we meet two brothers, an elder and a younger one, a distinction which is vital to the story. These brothers are opposed to each other in a number of traits. Esau, the elder brother, is characterized as a hunter, as active and outgoing. Jacob, the younger brother, is characterized as contemplative and as "a plain

man, dwelling in tents" (Gen 25:27). Esau is loved by his father, while Jacob is loved by his mother. Esau marries exogamously, while Jacob marries endogamously. A third important role is played by Isaac, their father. In administering the firstborn's blessing, he gives official recognition to the winner of the competition. The brothers' mother, likewise, plays an important role. She helps the younger brother to acquire the firstborn's blessing. She would appear to be the driving force, for she conceives the idea and arranges for the deceit. Finally, on a superhuman level, God validates, through his blessing, the position achieved by the younger brother.

Turning to the Leah-Rachel story, we find an exact equivalent in the participants and their role behavior. There are two sisters, and here, too, the distinction between elder and younger sister is important to the story. As in the case of the brothers, a certain degree of opposition is emphasized. Leah, the elder sister, becomes fertile, while Rachel, the younger sister, remains barren for a considerable period of time. Leah has an obvious beauty defect, while Rachel is outstandingly beautiful. Rachel is loved by her husband, while Leah is not. A third important role is played by Jacob, the husband-to-be. His role in the sisterly competition is equivalent to the role played by the father in the brotherly competition. The husband recognizes Leah as his wife, thus confirming her victory in the competition. Laban, the sisters' father, plays a role analogous to that of the brothers' mother. He helps the elder sister to acquire the husband and would appear to be the driving force, for he conceives the idea and arranges for the deceit. Finally, God shows his approval for the outcome of the competition and blesses Leah by making her exceptionally fertile.

The congruency of role behavior exposes the close resemblance of the goals competed for in both narrations. The brothers compete for the firstborn's blessing, in order to become the progenitor of the Jewish lineage. The sisters, competing for marriage to the man so recognized, are, in effect, competing

for a chance to bear children into the Jewish lineage. To participate in the continuation of the Jewish lineage is, then, the goal of both competitions.

A second set of structural congruencies can be found in the process by which the goal of the competition is achieved. In the Jacob-Esau story this process consists of three steps, proceeding from the lowest to the highest level of recognition. First, the agreement of the brother is gained: the elder brother sells his firstborn's privilege to the younger brother in exchange for something to eat. Secondly, in the form of the firstborn's blessing, the recognition of the father is gained through deception; the younger brother goes to the father pretending to be the elder brother. Thirdly, God gives his recognition of the younger brother's new status, after matters are decided on the human level; he blesses Jacob with the promise of descendants.

The Leah-Rachel story contains identical steps, although their temporal sequence is different. First, the recognition of the husband is gained through deception; the elder sister goes to the husband-to-be, pretending to be the younger sister. Secondly, God gives his approval to the elder sister, after Leah is married, and blesses her with fertility. Thirdly, Leah gains the agreement of the sister to sleep with Jacob and uses her chance for a further pregnancy; since this agreement is "bought" with the mandrake, the younger sister sells her privilege in the sleeping arrangement to the elder sister, in exchange for something to eat.

The symmetry of the two narrations is inverted by a thoroughgoing trait: as the sex of the siblings is inverted, so is their relative age. The younger brother, helped by the mother, accomplishes his goal by pretending to be the elder brother; the elder brother sells his privilege to the younger brother. The elder sister, helped by the father, accomplishes her goal by pretending to be the younger sister; the younger sister sells her privilege to the elder sister.

The inverted symmetry functions as a structural pointer for the "message" of the narration. It equates, yet distinguishes the case of the brothers and the case of the sisters. As has been shown, the identical component of the narrations is the goal of the competitions: To participate in the continuation of the Jewish lineage. The most significant distinction in the content of the two stories, however, is also related to the goal of the competitions: only one brother continues the Jewish lineage, while both sisters bear children who become Jewish ancestors. In brotherly or male competition, a choice has to be made; only one can continue the line. Male competition is exclusive, hence providing for homogeneity. In sisterly or female competition, both women can bear the right kind of children. Female competition is inclusive, hence providing for heterogeneity.

Reviewed within the general structure of descent, this narration is located at the intersection of the three processes and, actually, provides a micro-pattern corresponding to the macro-structure. Jacob is the last representative of invergence, including the notion of choice versus primogeniture. He is complemented by his brother Esau, the father of Edom, representing divergence. Leah and Rachel are the first representatives of segmentation. Their equal recognition necessitates the segmentation of the lineage. It is interesting to note that the transition from invergence to segmentation, from the lineage to the people, is mediated by the women. As male competition generates the Jewish *lineage* as opposed to the peoples of the world, female competition generates the Jewish *people*. As male competition generates uniqueness within the diversity, female competition generates diversity within the uniqueness.

The micro-pattern, then, resounds a variation on the structural dialectics of the macro-pattern. The macro-pattern of descent declares Israel as the synthesis of homogeneity and heterogeneity, of uniqueness and diversity and, thus, resolves the cognitive dissonance between the specific and the general as apparent in the worldview. The micro-pattern of the Jacob narration

symbolizes the synthesis of homogeneity and heterogeneity as the synthesis of male and female roles.

NOTE

[1] Quotations from the Old Testament refer to the following books:

Genesis (Gen)
Exodus (Ex)
Leviticus (Lev)
Deuteronomy (Dt)
1 Chronicles (1 Ch)
1 Samuel (1 S)
Judges (Jg)

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