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The Patriarchal Boundaries, Canaan and the Land of Israel: Patterns and Application in Biblical Historiography*

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I

AMONG the issues pertaining to the Promised Land, perhaps the most perplexing is that of the patriarchal boundaries, set forth in the covenant of Abram (Gen. 15:18b).¹ The promise of the land occupies a central place in the ideology of ancient Israel due to the notion that the acquisition of, and right to possess, a country are due to divine intervention.

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W.R. Smith (*Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, London, 1894 [2nd ed.], pp. 318–319, 379–380) discussed the divine covenant with Abram, with particular attention to the social and ethical aspects.

1 For extensive discussions, see P. Diepold: *Israels Land*, Stuttgart, 1972, esp. pp. 29–41, 56–64; M. Saebø: *Grenzbeschreibung und Landideal im Alten Testament. Mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der min-'ad-Formel*, *ZDPV* 90 (1974), pp. 14–37; both with further literature. For most recent discussions, cf. S. Mittmann: *Deuteronomium 1₁–6₃*, (*Beihefte ZAW* 139), Berlin — New York, 1975, pp. 18–24; L. Peritt: *Deuteronomium (Biblischer Kommentar)*, Neukirchen-Vluyn (fasc. 1), 1990, pp. 35–53, esp. p. 39; M. Weinfeld: *Deuteronomy 1–11*, New York, 1991, pp. 133–134; *idem*, *The Promise of the Land, The Inheritance of the Land of Canaan by the Israelites*, Berkeley — Los Angeles — Oxford, 1993, pp. 52–75, 149–150. Most commentaries are primarily concerned with source analysis of the texts and the covenant, and consider all references to the promise of the land on one plane. This, however, reaches an objectionable vein in Gunkel's commentary: cf. H. Gunkel: *Genesis* (7th ed.), Göttingen, 1966, pp. 182–183. A prominent notion is that these circumscriptions reflect the Davidic–Solomonic realm. Cf., e.g., A. Caquot: *L'alliance avec Abram (Genèse 15)*, *Semitica* 12 (1962), p. 66; N. Lohfink: *Die Landverheissung als Eid (Stuttgarter Bibelstudien 28)*, Stuttgart, 1967, pp. 65–66, 73–76; B. Mazar: *The Historical Background of the Book of Genesis*, *JNES* 28 (1969), p. 75; R. de Vaux: *An Early History of Israel*, Philadelphia, 1978, p. 5. However, the formal manner of citation of this territorial concept in respect of the Solomonic realm, without detailed foundation, shows this to be an applied pattern, whereas the formulation of the covenant is well integrated in a wider complementary construction. The independent conceptual basis of the patriarchal boundaries is demonstrated thereby. It should be noted that acts of the Patriarchs are construed to serve as precedent and preparation for circumstances that actually obtain in history, and thus serve as the theoretical basis for concepts derived

The major problem is the intimate relationship of these boundaries to those of the Promised Land, notwithstanding an indubitable territorial disparity between them. A clear territorial distinction must be drawn between three concepts: 1) the patriarchal boundaries; 2) the land of Canaan; and 3) the land of Israel (Fig. 1). Of these three, Canaan is the Promised Land, while the land of Israel, despite its partial territorial divergence, is the realization of this promise. The patriarchal boundaries, however, although closely linked with the promise of the land, patently differ from the other two delineations. Defining their respective territorial outlines and ascertaining the associated patterns and formulae which express and intimate these concepts will clarify their several historiographical functions.

As the texts concerned are subject to rules of scribal tradition, it will be useful to review the principles operative in biblical historiography and narrative. The various definitions employ stylized patterned formulations which express basic conceptual frameworks. A major feature of such conceptual complexes is a unity of intrinsic conceptual identity that yet allows diversity of form.

II

The relationship between the land of Canaan and the land of Israel has been examined in various studies of the present writer.² The general conclusions are as follows:

The Land of Canaan

The boundaries of the land of Canaan are outlined in Numbers 34:2b–12 and paralleled in Ezekiel 47:15–20, who modelled the future land of Israel on the boundaries of the Promised Land. Further details are gleaned from the description of the remaining land and people (Josh. 13:2–6; Judg. 3:3aβb), in which Joshua's conquests are compared to the boundaries of Canaan, and from the summary of Joshua's conquests (Josh. 11:17; 12:7), which tally Canaan's boundaries in the south.

The northern frontier of Canaan is drawn from the Mediterranean Sea to Mount Hor, north of Gebal (Byblos). It extends to Apheka ('Afqa) on the Nahr 'Ibrahīm,

therefrom, cf. Z. Kallai: *The Campaign of Chedorlaomer and Biblical Historiography*, *Shnaton, An Annual for Biblical and Near Eastern Studies* 10 (1990), pp. 153–168, esp. pp. 154, 166 (Hebrew), XXII–XXIII (English summary). For a different analysis, cf. N. Lohfink: *Dtn 12,1 and Gen 15,18: Das dem Samen Abrahams geschenkte Land als der Geltungsbereich der deuteronomischen Gesetze*, in M. Görg (ed.): *Die Väter Israels: Beiträge zur Theologie der Patriarchenüberlieferungen im Alten Testament*, Stuttgart, 1989, pp. 183–210, esp. pp. 198–207. N. Na'aman (The Shihor of Egypt and Shur that is before Egypt, *Tel Aviv* 7 [1980], p. 98) considers the patriarchal boundaries to be the Deuteronomist's promise for the extension of Israel in the end of days.

- 2 Z. Kallai: *Tribes, territories of*, in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, suppl. vol., Nashville, 1976, pp. 921–923; *idem*, *The United Monarchy of Israel — A Focal Point in Israelite Historiography*, *IEJ* 27 (1977), pp. 103–109; *idem*, *Historical Geography of the Bible*, Jerusalem — Leiden, 1986, pp. 102–111.

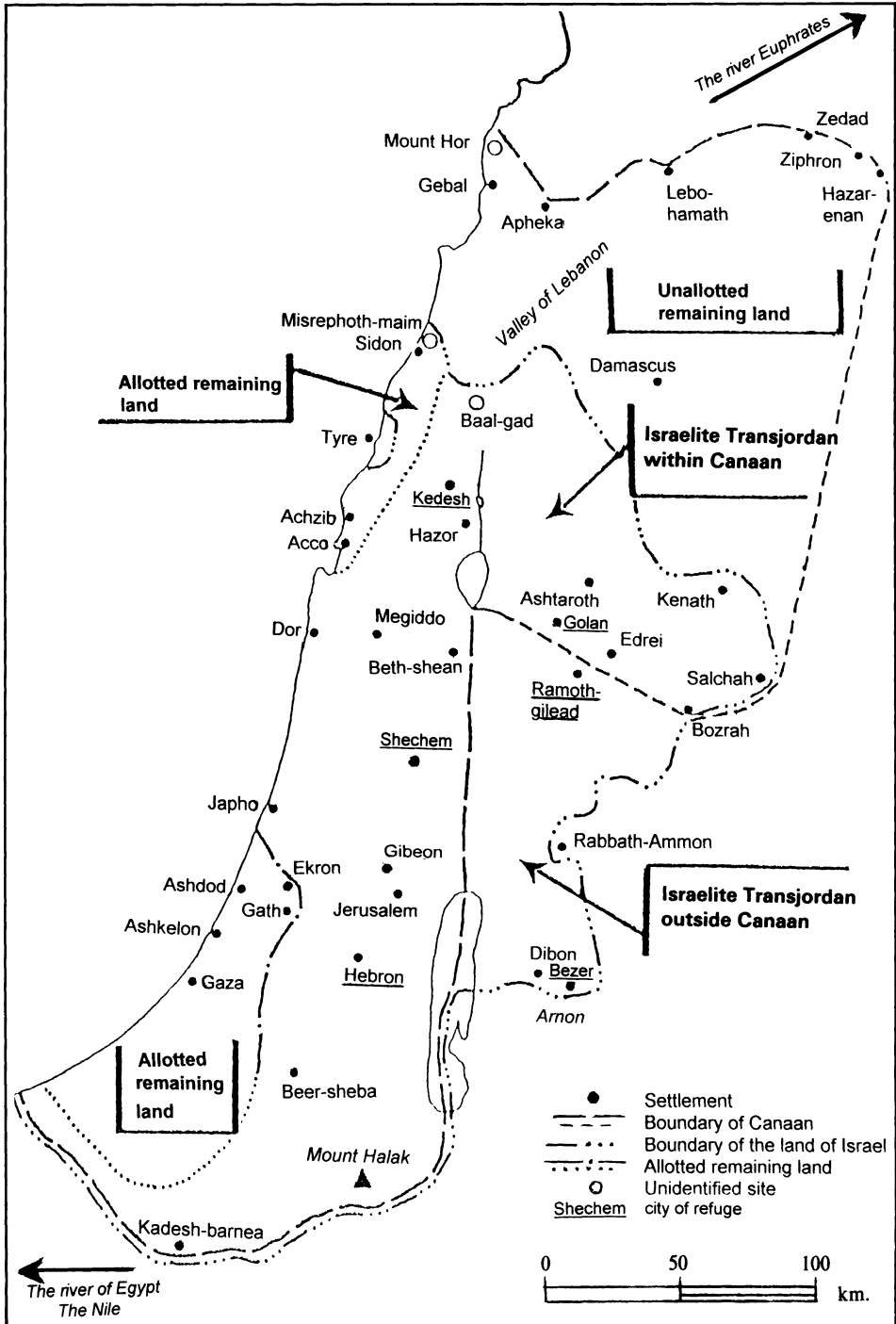


Fig. 1. Map of Canaan and the land of Israel.

then to Lebo-hamath (Labweh) in the Valley of Lebanon, and further encompasses the land of Damascus and northern Transjordan, the Bashan, to the southern end of Lake Chinnereth. From there, the eastern frontier continues along the river Jordan and the Dead Sea. From the southern end of the Dead Sea the southern boundary extends at first south-west, skirts the Negeb highlands along Mount Halak, passes the Ascent of Akrabbim and Kadesh-barnea, and then reaches the Mediterranean by the brook of Egypt (Wādi 'el-'Arīš).

Since the land of Canaan is considered to be the basis of its successor, the land of Israel, there are notable literary links between them. They are contrasted with each other, thus highlighting features that are either in common or diverging. Due to territorial-historical developments in Israelite Transjordan, deemed outside of Canaan, the Books of Deuteronomy and Joshua restrict the extent of the land of Canaan to Cisjordan alone. The north-south compass is not affected, but extra-Canaanite Transjordan is extended to encompass the Bashan as well.

In addition to the outright boundary description of Canaan, there are patterns and formulae that represent this entity and intimate it, and are thus synonymous with it. The most pertinent brief formula is 'from Lebo-hamath to the brook of Egypt', used to denote either the land of Canaan, or, in an applied sense, the imperial realm of Israel. At times 'the river of Egypt' is used, instead of 'the brook of Egypt' (1 Kings 8:65; 1 Chron. 13:5; 2 Chron. 7:8, and segmented, Josh. 13:3aα, 5b). There are also variations, such as 'from the wilderness of Zin to Rehob Lebo-hamath' (Num. 13:21), or references in the south to the Dead Sea area (2 Kings 14:25; Amos 6:14), and even intimating the southern extremity alone (Judg. 1:36). A different description listing major centres at the extremities, rather than borders, is to be found in Genesis 10:19.

Another way of alluding to the land of Canaan, and to it alone, is by enumerating the seven pre-Israelite nations.³ This occurs either in a fuller form — listing all seven, or sometimes six, nations — or in a representative, abbreviated reference, enumerating the Canaanite and Amorite alone, sometimes with an additional element for emphasis.⁴

The Land of Israel

Since the boundaries of the land of Israel — the realization of the Promised Land — are not explicitly stated in any one source, its outline must be compounded from various descriptions. A primary source is the boundary descriptions of the allotments of the individual tribes (Josh. 13–19), which taken together, constitute the land of Israel. Certain distinctions regarding the general territory and the individual allotments may be found in the outline of the remaining land and peoples (Josh.

3 Cf. the study of T. Ishida: *The Structure and Historical Implications of the Lists of Pre-Israelite Nations*, *Biblica* 60 (1979), pp. 461–490.

4 Cf. Kallai (above, n. 1), pp. 162–164.

13:2–6; Judg. 3:3b) and in the list of the conquest lacunae (Judg. 1:21, 27–35).

A specific element is the acquisition of the land of Israel by act of war. This is expressed by the term ‘treading of the foot’ in the course of waging war (Deut. 11:24a; Josh. 1:3). The area covered by the conquest narratives, in Transjordan as well as in Cisjordan/Canaan, and the summaries of the conquests (Deut. 2:24–3:17; 4:47–49; Josh. 2–13) provide the basis for the allotted land, and hence the outline of the land of Israel.

The southern boundary of the land of Israel is identical with that attributed in biblical historiography to the land of Canaan. In the north it falls short of the frontier of Canaan, and is drawn from the Mediterranean Sea, somewhat north of Sidon, to Baal-gad, at the southern end of the Valley of Lebanon, below Mount Hermon. Hence, the land of Israel includes Mount Hermon and the northern and central part of Transjordan, comprising the Bashan, Gilead and the Plain (Mishor) up to the river Arnon. Further south, the eastern boundary continues along the Dead Sea to its southern end. Thus, as aforementioned, the land of Israel falls short of the land of Canaan in Cisjordan, and extends beyond the land of Canaan in Transjordan.

Various synonymous expressions referring to the land of Israel are in use in biblical literature. Most common is ‘from Dan to Beer-sheba’ indicating the major centres in the country’s northern and southern regions. Another means is the enumeration of the tribes to allude to all or part of the country (e.g. Judg. 5:14–18; 6:35; 2 Chron. 30:10–12; 34:5–6), or the listing of regions or regional centres (e.g. Deut. 34:1–3; 2 Kings 10:33). In addition, the expression ‘from Dan to Beer-sheba’ is paraphrased by naming the tribes at the country’s extremities: ‘...and Simeon and unto Naphtali’ (2 Chron. 34:6aβ).

The Patriarchal Boundaries

As aforementioned, the patriarchal boundaries are enunciated in the divine covenant with Abram, in which this region is promised to his descendants (Gen. 15). Apart from the initial pronouncement (Gen. 15:18), this formula recurs with some variations, which do not alter its compass (Exod. 23:31; Deut. 1:7; 11:24; Josh. 1:4). The same circumscription is also used in applied form (1 Kings 5:1 [= 2 Chron. 9:26]; 2 Kings 24:7; Isa. 27:12a), as well as in a later formulation based on the administrative term of Eber-Nāri (1 Kings 5:4). The area comprises practically the entire region between Egypt and Mesopotamia, including the nomadic desert fringe. The various definitions are all elliptical, but can be understood in full, particularly due to the complementary nature of the diverse formulations.

The briefest delineation of the patriarchal boundaries is the formulation related in the covenant narrative, ‘from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates’ (Gen. 15:18). The three references in Deuteronomy 1:7; 11:24 and Joshua 1:4 add Mount Lebanon as a marker. The definition in Exodus 23:31 is more unusual in its reference to ‘the Sea of Reeds’. The north-eastern extremity, the river Euphrates, is always indicated, whether in full or abbreviated as ‘the river’. The south-western

boundary is generally the border of Egypt, marked by 'the river of Egypt' or merely implied, with 'the Sea of Reeds' serving in the same capacity. The applied references are in the same vein, and only 2 Kings 24:7 substitutes 'the brook of Egypt' for 'the river of Egypt'.

An important aspect to be noted is the parallelism between the region defined and its peoples, expressed in the enumeration of ten peoples (Gen. 15:19–21), seven of which are the frequently cited pre-Israelite nations of Canaan, while three are specific to the patriarchal boundaries. These three are the Kenite, the Kenizzite and the Kadmonite. Of the seven Canaanite peoples, the Hivvite, normally listed in the full roster, is replaced by the Rephaim, who is related to Mount Ephraim in the settlement traditions, together with the Perizzite (Josh. 17:15). This enumeration clearly refers to the land of Canaan represented by the seven peoples, and beyond it indicates the fringe areas in the south and south-east of Canaan (Kenite and Kenizzite) and sweepingly the rest of the eastern part of the region (the Kadmonite). In this respect the notice regarding the descendants of Abraham's concubines sent off to the 'east' (Gen. 25:6) is relevant.

Bearing in mind this testimony regarding the peoples who represent the region, there can be no doubt regarding its general eastern extent. In this light, it is feasible to examine further some of the landmarks mentioned in these descriptions, which may be evaluated in different ways: 'the desert', 'the Sea of Reeds' and 'the Lebanon'. It should be noted that the use of the 'from... to' formula in these circumscriptions is rather flexible. The basic connotation is to indicate the extent from one end to another (e.g. Gen. 15:18; 1 Sam. 3:20). In most of these formulations, however, there is an elliptical element; at times, the extent of the region is intimated across far-reaching expanses; at other times different landmarks are given on one side of the region, or even progress consecutively in one direction (e.g. Josh. 13:26).

'The desert'. The designation 'the desert' is the vaguest of the terms under review. In the narratives describing the wandering of the Israelites, 'the desert' is used to indicate areas south of the land of Canaan, in the direction of the Red Sea, and in Transjordan. In this context it is obvious that the reference is to the eastern desert, particularly its southern part. Thus, 'the desert' constitutes the south-eastern extremity of the region defined.

'The Sea of Reeds'. Two locations are attested for 'the Sea of Reeds': both on the eastern border of Egypt proper (e.g. Exod. 13:18; 15:22), like 'the river of Egypt', and as the sea-arm reaching to Ezion-geber (1 Kings 9:26). In this circumscription, it is most reasonable to assume that the reference is to the former. The problem in this interpretation is the relative proximity of 'the Sea of Reeds' to 'the Sea of the Philistines', linked with the 'from... to' formula, but this can be resolved if we interpret the formulation as giving two extremities in the south-west, Egypt and the Mediterranean Sea, followed by two designations in the south-east and north-east, the desert and the river Euphrates.

'The Lebanon'. This term is more problematic, because 'the Lebanon' or 'Mount Lebanon' is apparently not on the periphery of the region defined. Its position in the area described requires, therefore, clarification.⁵ The Lebanon has been recognized as an intermediary station between the south-west (Egypt) and the north-east (the Euphrates); the question, however, is the status of this station. The relevant passages clearly indicate that these are references to the Promised Land — the land of Canaan — or in applied form, to the imperial realm of David and Solomon. Within Numbers 34:2b–12, which provides the basic outline of Canaan, v. 8 implies that the Lebanon is within its boundaries. Deuteronomy 3:25b; Joshua 9:1 and 13:5–6 clearly show the Lebanon to be part of the land of Canaan. In 1 Kings 9:19 (= 2 Chron. 8:6), the Lebanon is highlighted within the realm of Solomon.⁶ Therefore, the significance of listing the Lebanon as a landmark in the patriarchal boundaries, in the three references of Deuteronomy 1:7 and 11:24, as well as Joshua 1:4, is to emphasize and distinguish Canaan from what lay beyond.

There are still two problems to be considered: 1) the function of the land of the Hittites in this description; and 2) the reference to the Lebanon, despite the fact that it is not peripheral.

1. The specification 'all the land of the Hittites' (Josh. 1:4) parallels the designation of the border of the Amorite (Amurru) as being beyond the land of Canaan (Josh. 13:4). This, then, is a reference to central and northern Syria, within the patriarchal boundaries, but beyond the land of Canaan. Structurally, this is an additional feature, parallel to the river Euphrates, contraposed to the south-western extremity, the Great Sea of the setting sun.
2. Since the Lebanon is in the western part of the region, the definition of that area, marked by the Mediterranean Sea, should be reviewed. References to the Mediterranean Sea are either implicit (Gen. 15:18; Deut. 1:7) or explicitly denoting the posterior sea (Deut. 11:24) or the Great Sea in the west (Josh. 1:4). Only Exodus 23:31 specifies the Sea of the Philistines, emphasizing the southern part of the coast.

5 Cf. Saebo (above, n. 1), pp. 19–20.

6 The singular phrasing of Solomon's building activities '...to build in Jerusalem and in the Lebanon...' is intriguing. Solomon's realm is indicated as being 'from Lebo-hamath to the brook of Egypt' (1 Kings 8:65), which refers to the imperial realm, applying the pattern of the land of Canaan. It can be conjectured that 'Jerusalem' and 'the Lebanon' are representative terms for the two components of the realm: the land of Israel (Jerusalem) and beyond (the Lebanon). In this vein one may also understand the formulation of Moses' request to see the land (Deut. 3:25) — 'this good mountain and the Lebanon' — clearly referring to the Promised Land, the land of Canaan, west of the Jordan. The text (vv. 26–27) shows this episode to be read in conjunction with Deuteronomy 34:1–4, where there is, however, a modification. The land shown to Moses is the land of Israel on both sides of the Jordan, which differs from the scope of the Promised Land. Cf. also below, n. 15.

Since it is not only the Philistine coast that is part of Canaan, which patently encompasses the coastal area further north as well, the Sea of the Philistines only refers to the furthest part of the coast. It is, therefore, difficult to determine whether 'the Lebanon' represents the northern part of Canaan, including its coastal area, or whether its sole purpose is to indicate the starting point of the areas additional to the land of Canaan, beyond the Lebanon.⁷

All of the above data, when combined, offer a general outline of the region covered by the patriarchal boundaries: from Egypt to the river Euphrates, and from the Mediterranean Sea to the desert east of the sedentary country, thus clearly including Transjordan. The region comprises, therefore, the land of Canaan, as defined in biblical historiography, and the additional areas beyond, to the east and to the north. The extent along the coastal area and into the desert, or along the river Euphrates, cannot be established definitively.

III

As discussed above, the region covered by the patriarchal boundaries is represented by its geographical outline and its ten indigenous peoples; the land of Canaan by its geographical circumscription and the seven pre-Israelite nations; and the land of Israel by various territorial descriptions, comprehensive and regional, and by reference to the tribes of Israel. The territorial aspect is further intimated by the act and scope of the conquest ('treading of the foot').⁸ This, in turn, is to be associated with the injunction to Abram to roam the country in its length and breadth, 'for I will give it to you' (Gen. 13:17).

The interrelationship of the three concepts is evident. The patriarchal boundaries are at the root of the covenant and the promise of the land. The extent of that region is cited on several occasions, all related to the promise of the land, and ultimately in connection with the act of going there to inherit it. As the disparity among the three regions referred to is manifest, the degree of this relationship and its limitations are of primary importance.

The most prominent historiographical correlation is that between the land of Israel and the land of Canaan. The extent of the conquest by the Israelites, which

7 The inclusion of the coastal area within the comprehensive term 'the Lebanon', the prominent mountain region of the area, is problematic. Josh. 9:1 not only emphasizes the distinction of the coastal plain, but gives particular prominence to the diverse geographical regions of the country, noting the extent of the land in the north to include the coast over against 'the Lebanon'. In general, both modes of circumscription may be encountered. A good example is the Gilead. Comprehensive descriptions based on the dominant feature are in Deut. 3:10, 12–13; Josh. 13:9–12; 2 Kings 10:33, and circumscriptions in which the Jordan Valley is distinctively mentioned, in Deut. 3:14–17; 4:49; Josh. 12:1–5; 13:25–27.

8 Cf. Kallai (above, n. 2, 1977), p. 105.

constitutes the land of Israel, is measured against the land of Canaan. Likewise, the seven pre-Israelite nations or a representative group of them are listed in connection with the act of settlement. There is never any territorial comparison between the land of Israel and the patriarchal boundaries, nor is there ever a repetition of the group of ten peoples.⁹ The peregrinations of the patriarchs are also limited to the area of the land of Israel. The only exception is Abram's prevalence over the four kings during Chedorlaomer's campaign (Gen. 14). As has been shown elsewhere, this act of Abram covers the lands of the future Israel and its kindred neighbours together, as evinced by the intimately related exodus narrative, primarily in Deuteronomy 1–3.¹⁰ Moreover, there are distinctions in this respect within the Chedorlaomer narrative. The prevalence over the four kings, thus inheriting their conquest on both sides of the Jordan and the Arabah, is implied by the kings' rout. The belligerent act, however, is conducted only in Cisjordan, the land of Canaan as envisaged in the Books of Deuteronomy and Joshua, until Dan, the northern centre of the land of Israel, with a further stage to Hoba left of Damascus, the limit of the land of Canaan. Moreover, this episode follows on the parting of ways between Abram, representing the future Israel, and Lot, father of two kindred nations in Transjordan (Gen. 13). The third kindred nation in Transjordan whose territory is covered by this episode, Seir, is related to Esau-Edom, Jacob's brother.

A further issue to be clarified is the perplexing passage in Deuteronomy 19 dealing with the cities of refuge, particularly vv. 2–3, 7–9. The basic injunction is clearly defined in Numbers 35:10–14. Six cities of refuge are to be assigned: three in Transjordan and three in Canaan. Deuteronomy 4:41–43 specifies the three Transjordanian cities: Golan, Ramoth-gilead and Bezer; Joshua 20 reiterates the decree and specifies the three cities in Cisjordan, Canaan: Kedesh, Shechem and Hebron (v. 7) and the three that had been given in Transjordan (v. 8). All this pertains to the known land of Israel. The question to be addressed is whether the intimation in Deuteronomy 19 of a further expansion of Israel relates to the patriarchal boundaries.

Admittedly, the formulation of this chapter is rather vague. After reiterating the instruction to set aside three cities in the land of Canaan (esp. vv. 2–3, 7), there is a

9 Consequently, there is no basis to correlate the Promised Land with the patriarchal boundaries, as Weinfeld maintains. Cf. M. Weinfeld: *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, Oxford, 1972, pp. 22–23, 237, n. 3; *idem*, The Extent of the Promised Land — The Status of Transjordan, in G. Strecker (ed.): *Das Land Israel in biblischer Zeit*, Göttingen, 1983, p. 66; Weinfeld (above, n. 1, 1991); *idem* (above, n. 1, 1993). Moreover, the postulated relationship between the acceptance of Transjordan as part of the Promised Land by the Deuteronomist and the concept of the patriarchal boundaries in Gen. 15 is untenable. Deuteronomistic writing is consistent in its distinction between the Promised Land, which does not include Transjordan, and the land of Israel, which does. The roles of Moses and Joshua conform with this distinction. Num. 34 differs in the scope of the land of Canaan, the Promised Land, but the essential distinction is the same (cf. above, n. 2).

10 Kallai (above, n. 1), *passim*, esp. pp. 164–167.

further command (vv. 8–9) to set aside three additional cities, if, in the future, the inheritance is extended to include the entire country promised to the Fathers.¹¹ This unusual phrasing could indeed be construed to allude to the patriarchal boundaries. However, considering the overall framework, this does not seem to be the case.

Despite the idealizing character of this passage, there is no reason to divorce it from the general framework in which it is conceived. The reciprocity of injunction and compliance prompts the conclusion that the command is to be judged in light of the manner in which the performance is formulated. In the conceptual framework of Deuteronomy and Joshua (and in this case also with extension in Numbers), the territorial picture that dominates the issue of the cities of refuge is conclusive. This passage clearly refers to the three cities to be set aside in Canaan, i.e. in Cisjordan, and they are within the bounds of the land of Israel, which falls short of the Promised Land, the land of Canaan. Following the idea which terms the unconquered part of Canaan ‘the remaining land’ (Josh. 13:2–6), singling out the northern expanse as unconquered and unallotted (*ibid.*, vv. 4aβ–5), this passage may be understood to be phrased in this spirit. The idealized fulfilment of the promise is evident in Ezekiel’s vision of the future Israel (Ezek. 47–48). His picture of the land of Israel fully accords with the land of Canaan as defined in Numbers 34, without extra-Canaanite territories in central Transjordan and without deficiency in the north of Canaan. This, then, would extend the future land of Israel considerably northward, in comparison to the land of Israel as depicted in the territorial circumscriptions of Deuteronomy and Joshua. Taken in this light, therefore, Deuteronomy 19 does not exceed the framework of the relative position of the lands of Israel and Canaan.¹²

IV

It seems that the foregoing deliberations have provided sufficient ground to elucidate the conceptual and historiographical significance of the patriarchal boundaries with respect to the Promised Land. It should be recalled that the Promised Land, the land of Canaan, fulfills a historiographical function in relation to its successor, the land of Israel. The relation of the patriarchal boundaries to the promise of the land, despite the patently different compass and lack of other operative links, is at the root of this inquiry. The method employed throughout is to base any inference squarely on the intrinsic testimony of the texts, according to their focal interest and purpose.

According to this line of reasoning, the discussion of the patriarchal boundaries must revert to the testimony that may be elicited from the basic framework in

11 The promise to the fathers regarding the land always refers to the Patriarchs. In addition to the covenant of Abram, the passages concerned are the preliminary announcement to Abram in Genesis 13:14–17, and the reiteration to Jacob in Genesis 28:13–14. The question of the specific promise in the covenant is discussed below.

12 Cf. above, n. 9.

Genesis 15. This concept was found not to be operative in the historiographical function of the Promised Land, and it is not brought into correlation with the land of Israel. Therefore the question is: what are the constituents inherent in it, and what makes it the foundation of the promise of the land, cited on several occasions.

The fundamental affirmation of this covenant with Abram is that this land is to be given to his descendants, followed by the geographical circumscription of the entire region and the enumeration of the ten indigenous peoples (Gen. 15:18–21). This is the culmination of the covenant narrative, but this final section is preceded by the more detailed announcement of the fate that will befall his descendants, namely that they will be strangers in a foreign land where they will be enslaved, and that only the fourth generation will return, because the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete (Gen. 15:13–16). This refers specifically and exclusively to the people of Israel. Two aspects of Israelite history are resorted to: the descent to Egypt and the Exodus, on the one hand, and the reference to the Promised Land, the land of Canaan, through the mention of the Amorite, one of the seven pre-Israelite nations, on the other. Like the Canaanite, the Amorite may, according to the convention of this pattern, represent all seven. The term ‘descendants’ is, therefore, used in two distinct senses in this chapter: the comprehensive and the restricted. It should be noted that this use of different scopes without further elaboration is not uncommon.

This dual connotation of the covenant creates a dichotomy within the patriarchal boundaries: the land of Canaan, destined for the people of Israel, and the additional areas for the other descendants of Abram. The formula that defines the overall domain of the sons of Ishmael is indicative in this respect: ‘and they dwelt from Havilah unto Shur that is over-against Egypt, [and] as you come towards Asshur, over-against all his brothers he pitched’ (Gen. 25:18).¹³ This aspect of the patriarchal

13 This territorial circumscription refers to the whole confederacy; cf. Genesis 21:21, referring to the Wilderness of Paran only. The verb *npl* that denotes the encamping/dwelling of the Ishmaelites figures also in Judges 7:12, referring to nomadic raiders, paralleled in Judges 6:33 where the verb *hnh* is used. The same sweeping statement concerning Ishmael’s abode, without the territorial details, appears in the story of his birth, in Gen. 16:12, with the verb *škn*. It is noteworthy that the comprehensive area defined is a regional circumscription which is to be taken in its general connotation. Moreover, various references to this area or parts of it show this to be a definition that is part of an established geographical structure, utilized in scribal convention in a comprehensive and patterned manner. It is, therefore, a regional indication which need not be precise or exhaustive. The descriptive phrase ‘over against all his brothers he pitched’ or ‘will dwell’ (Gen. 16:12) sustains the contention that all fringe areas of the whole region intimated in the covenant, reaching to the Euphrates, are referred to in the circumscription of the abode of the confederacy of the Ishmaelites. Delitzsch’s proposal — that *b’kh šwrh* ‘as you come towards Asshur’ should be omitted, being a corrupt variant of ‘*d šwr*’ unto Shur’, erroneously introduced into the text — is therefore untenable; see F. Delitzsch: *Die Lese- und Schreibfehler im*

boundaries is further underlined by the enumeration of the peoples and clans related to Abraham by his wife Keturah (Gen. 25:1–6).¹⁴ Moreover, the differential application of the term ‘seed’, ‘descendant’, is clearly sustained by the passage that describes the turning away of Hagar and Ishmael, where both Isaac and Ishmael are defined in the same conclusive manner (Gen. 21:12–13).

In this connection one may ask how to account for other peoples who gained a foothold in the region defined by the patriarchal boundaries, although not strictly classified as descendants of Abraham. It seems that a degree of flexibility must be assumed to obtain in this construction which regulates the relationships within the region. A primary indication in this respect is to be found in the generalizing term ‘the Kadmonite’ (Gen. 15:19), which covers the entire eastern expanse beyond the areas defined by the other, more specific, names. Within this wide area, the sons of Lot, Moab and Ammon, and the Aramaeans are to be found. Lot may be perceived as qualifying for this classification in two ways. He is Abraham’s nephew, who joins him in leaving Ur of the Chaldees and Haran to go to the land of Canaan (Gen. 11:31; 12:4; 13:1) until they part ways (Gen. 13:5–11). In addition, a kind of client relationship between Lot and Abraham may be intimated in the episode of Chedorlaomer’s campaign (Gen. 14:12–15), when Abram prevails over the eastern kings and retrieves Lot and his property from them. Aram’s position

Alten Testament, Berlin — Leipzig, 1920, p. 134. Part of this formula, restricted to the southern section of this area, is applied to define the Amalekites’ abode, in 1 Sam. 15:7, and a more restricted reference, based on the same definition, figures in 1 Sam. 27:8 in respect of the Amalekites and other nomadic peoples. In this passage the appositional clause ‘up to the land of Egypt’ is linked to the initial description, ‘as you come to Shur’, by a *wāw explicativum*. Another part of the general area, in the north-east, is indicated when speaking of the Reubenites prevailing over the Hagarites east of the Gilead (1 Chron. 5:9–10). The terms of this general geographical concept also figure in the complex information pertaining to Abraham’s peregrinations in the south (Gen. 20:1). He goes to the land of the Negeb, he dwells between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourns in Gerar. Kadesh signifies the southern border of the land of Canaan, and Shur is at the border of Egypt.

The manner of defining a territory encountered in this context may be seen in a number of examples: Gen. 10:19; Josh. 13:25; Judg. 11:33. Concerning the region defined in Gen. 25:18 and the different peoples related to it, cf. J. Liver: Ishmael, Ishmaelite, *Enq. Miqr.* 3, Jerusalem, 1958, cols. 902–906, esp. 904–905 (Hebrew); I. Eph’al: *The Ancient Arabs* (2nd ed.), Jerusalem, 1984, pp. 233–236. For the definition of the land’s southern border, cf. Z. Kallai: The southern border of the land of Israel — pattern and application, *VT* 34 (1987), pp. 438–445, esp. p. 444. The interpretation offered refutes Na’aman’s analysis (above, n. 1), pp. 100–105.

14 This is related to the summary announcement that the sons of Abraham’s concubines were sent off to the land of Kedem. In this respect, cf. the discussion above of the indigenous peoples listed in the covenant and the place of the Kadmonite in the general structure envisaged.

is somewhat more removed, but can be reconciled as well. The relationship with Aram is formulated in the list of descendants of Abraham's brother Nahor (Gen. 22:20–24) and is further accentuated by Jacob's marriage to the daughters of Laban, who dwells in the land of the sons of Kedem (Gen. 29:1; cf. the Kadmonite of Gen. 15:19). This connection is formalized in the covenant between Jacob and Laban (Gen. 31:44–54).

Bearing in mind the two-fold meaning of the term 'descendants', the patriarchal boundaries, as related in the covenant of Abram, can now be understood to embrace these varied aspects. Based on this comprehensive status of the covenant, its citation in passages concerning the specific promise of the land to the people of Israel is understandable.¹⁵ It is not the territorial, but the constitutional foundation of the promise of the land to Israel that is invoked.

15 This specific, restricted connotation of Abram's covenant is unequivocally referred to in the historical summary before the renewed covenant in Neh. 9–10:1. In v. 8 the promise to Abram to give the land to his descendants is related only to the inheritance of the land of Canaan. This is expressed by listing the representative group of the six pre-Israelite nations. This explicitly stated in poetic form in Ps. 105:8–11 (paralleled in 1 Chron. 16:15–18). In line with this notion, Neh. 9 distinguishes between the land of Canaan (vv. 23–25) and the Transjordanian inheritance beyond (v. 22b). The explicit reference to the land of Canaan corresponds with the general idea of the promise and inheritance of the land. A noteworthy transformation of this pattern may, however, be noted in formulations in which the promise is directly related to the land of Israel. This is quite clearly expressed in Deut. 34:1–4, and intimated in Josh. 21:41–43 (43–45). In Deut. 34:4, however, the distinction between the Canaanite and extra-Canaanite parts of the land of Israel is maintained by retaining the formula that Moses is not to cross into the Promised Land — 'but thou shalt not go over thither'. In line with that stance, the place of Moses' death continues to be defined as being in the land of Moab (v. 5). The basis of this modification, which relates the land of Israel and Canaan to the promise, is clearly the conception that the land of Israel is the fulfilment of the promise. The usual reference to the land of Canaan is the doctrinal basis, and the land of Israel the result in practice. The summary in Josh. 21:41–43 (43–45) is aptly followed by the episode that regulates the relationship with Transjordan (Ch. 22). It is obviously designed to resolve the internal conflict between the concepts of the Promised Land and the land of Israel. This passage in Josh. 21, which is clearly editorial in character, is not descriptive, but a representative formulation of the idea. The concise phrasing of this pronouncement and the repeated application of the specific expressions which fashion it, evince it to be an established formula that represents the inherent concept of the fulfilment of the promise. Therefore, the lack of completeness of the conquest, related in the historiographical sections, does not figure here. The ramified application of this formula in diverse literary frameworks as an indicator of aspects of the literary history of these complexes is analyzed by Braulik with reference to further literature. Cf. G. Braulik: *Zur Deuteronomistischen Konzeption von Freiheit und Frieden (VT Supplement 36)*, Leiden, 1985, pp. 29–39. As for the promise to the Fathers (p. 31), we consider all references to the fathers to pertain to the Patriarchs (see above, n. 11).

It is obvious that the patriarchal boundaries provide a comprehensive historiographical construction that constitutes the framework for a regional entity, in which Israel has its place.¹⁶ The evolution of this concept, and particularly its historical setting, are hard to define. There is a tendency to seek the origin of such a regional concept in the late administrative unit Eber-Nāri, but such a comprehensive view of this region may also be found in the extent of the Egyptian imperial realm in Asia during the New Kingdom. Altogether, it is quite natural to regard this region between Egypt and Mesopotamia as a distinct entity throughout antiquity.¹⁷ It seems that, in line with the notion that a country's possession by a nation is only due to divine sanction, this covenant serves to explain the status of Israel in its land and among its neighbours. Moreover, the emphatic preoccupation with this issue evinces the intellectual need of Israelite historiography in this sphere.¹⁸

The literary aspect of this phenomenon is no less enlightening. The diverse topics and motifs involved in this conceptual complex are stylized and patterned, and are expressed and alluded to in a variety of ways. The very reference to explicit or implied elements suffices to evoke the conceptual environment. It is indeed indicative of the highly formalized scribal tradition that the reference to the applied form of the concept — the territorial circumscription — represents in abstraction the basic concept, the covenant. When considering the diverse stylized patterned components that are adduced, the multi-layered nature of the unified composition becomes apparent. This is proof of an extended process of literary development and activity, and shows an advanced stage of scribal tradition steeped in this genre, thus capable of integrating the diverse elements on one plane.

16 It seems that the biblical historiographer recognizes three major regional groupings. The widest concept is represented in the cosmography formulated in the table of nations in Gen. 10. The narrowest group embodies Israel and the kindred nations of Transjordan, Edom, Moab and Ammon, that figures in Deut. 1–3, and related to that in Num. 21 and Gen. 14. The intermediate regional complex is defined by the patriarchal boundaries, which provides the frame of nations and tribes that occupy the area between Mesopotamia and Egypt and are deemed to be related through their connection to Abraham in varying degrees of closeness. For the relationship of Israel and the Transjordanian nations, cf. Z. Kallai: *The Wandering-Traditions from Kadesh-Barnea to Canaan: A Study in Biblical Historiography*, *Journal of Jewish Studies* 33 (1982), pp. 175–184; *idem* (above, n. 1).

17 In addition to the above-mentioned applied formulations that circumscribe this region, the following may also be noted: Zech. 9:10; Ps. 72:8; 80:12; 89:26.

18 Cf. Kallai (above, n. 2, 1977); *idem*, Beth-el-Luz and Beth-aven, in R. Liwak and S. Wagner (eds.): *Prophetie und geschichtliche Wirklichkeit im Alten Israel*, Stuttgart, 1991, p. 181.