GEN 13: ABRAHAM DISCOVERS THE LAND AS GOD'S GIFT

SEARCHING OUT THE AUTHOR'S INTENTION

Anthony Abela

1. How far Pope Pius XII's hermeneutical norm *"qua perspiciatur et definiatur, quid scriptor dicere intenderit"* may still be regarded as "summam interpretandi normam?"[1] Some approaches to the biblical text abandon this norm almost on princible: "We know, as students of literature, that the author's intention, his goals in writing for his contemporary audience, and his religious convictions, play a small role indeed in literary criticism and, more important, in the analysis of literary texts. We may be familiar with all this information, but we do not depend on it for interpretation, even with an avowedly religious poet such as Milton."[2] Diachronical analyses tend to obscure the concept with their insistance on seeing the text as a multi-levelled reality which owes its existence to several *intentiones* of several *auctores*.[3]

ANTHONY ABELA. Born in 1947. Studied at the Royal University of Malta from where he graduated first in Arts (1970) and then in Theology (1974). He was ordained in 1974. He continued his post-graduate studies at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome. In 1978 he obtained his Licentiate in Biblical Studies while in 1986 he defended his doctorial thesis on the Abraham narrative in Genesis as a literary unit. At present he forms part of the permanent staff of the Faculty of Theology in Malta.

1. *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (30th September 1943), *EB*, 557. "Quo in opere exsequendo ante oculos habeant interpres sibi illud omnium maximum curandum esse, ut clare despiciant ac definiant, quis sit verborum biblicorum sensus quem litteralem vocant .... ut auctoris mens luculenter patescat" ibid., *EB* 550.

2. Kenneth R.R. Gros Louis, "Some Methodological Considerations", *Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives*, II (eds. Kenneth R.R. Gros Louis/James S. Ackerman) (Abingdon; Nashville 1982) 16. This extreme position has been described as a miniature of the "antihistorical bias" nurtured as a reaction against the excesses of historical scholarship. Cfr. Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (Indiana University Press; Bloomington 1985) 7 – 8.

3. On diachronic and synchronic analysis cfr. Vern S. Poythress, "Analysing a Biblical Text: Some Important Linguistic Distinctions", *Scottish Journal of Theology* 32 (1979) 113 – 137 especially pp. 130 – 134. M. Sternberg distinguished between source-oriented inquiry and discourse-oriented inquiry. The former "concentrates on the real-life process that generated and shaped the biblical text: the origins and features of the material (documents, traditions) that went into the Bible, the passage from oral to written transmissions, the identity of the writers or schools, the modes of editorial work, the tampering by way of interpolation, scribal

Besides, the relatively recent appropriation by biblical scholarship of the methodology and principles of narrative poetics[4] has rendered the situation rather more complicated; for in the ambit of literary narrative art a distinction is usually drawn between the *author/writer* and the *narrator:* "Ce qui veut dire que, dans l'art du récit, le narrateur n'est jamais l'auteur, déjà connu ou encore inconnu, mais un rôle inventé et adopté par l'auteur."[5] "...Le narrateur du roman n'est pas l'auteur.. le narrateur est un personnage de fiction en qui l'auteur s'est métamorphosé."[6] "Whoever the biblical writer was, he did not speak in his own voice and by his natural privileges. Hence the imperative need to distinguish the person from the persona: the writer as the historical man (citizen, partisan, functionary, hunter of facts and records) behind the writing from the writer

misadventure, etc. In each case, then, interest focuses on some object behind the text – on a state of affairs or development which operated at the time as a source (material, antecedent, enabling condition) of biblical writing and which biblical writing now reflects in turn", *Poetics* 15. As an instance of the *überlieferungsgeschichtlich* approach to Gen 13, I shall mention the contribution of Rudolf Kilian, *Die vorpriesterlichen Abrahamsüberlieferungen literarkritisch und traditionsgeschichtlich untersucht* (BBB 24; Bonn 1966) 17 – 35. Behind the present text of Gen 13 (and that of Gen 12) Kilian distinguishes a basic stratum (Grundschicht) made up of 12, 1. 4a. 6a. 7. 8; 13, 2.5. 7a. 8. 9. 10a. 11a. and 14 (without the clause: "after Lot had separated from him"). 15 – 17. The narrative that emerges after this shearing process is supposed to be "eine ätiologische Bewältigung eines theologischen Problems, nämlich der Diskrepanz von Verheissung und Erfüllung." (33). If the entire land of Canaan was promised to our forefathers how come that the Jordan Valley does not belong to us? This narrative which presumes to meet this query arose at some period in Israelite history when the Jordan Valley was under the.rule of the Maobites – cfr Judg 3,12 – 30. By time this narrative was combined to the Sodom – Gomorrah complex so that the original stratum was enriched through 13, 12b. 13. 18. This aetiology began to function "als Exposition der Abraham – Lot – Erzählung" (E. Blum, *Die Komposition der Vätergeschichte* (WMANT 57; Neukirchen – Vluyn 1984) 284; cfr. R. Kilian, "Zur Überlieferungsgeschichte Lots", *BZ 132 14* (1970) 23 – 37). Besides these "vor-jahwistischer" there were "jahwistischer" expansions of the original narrative nucleus. The main contribution of the Yahwist consisted of the insertion (Einschub) of the "matriarch in danger" narrative: 12, 10 (perhaps). 11. 12. 13 a bß. 14. 15. 17 – 20 which till then led an independent existance. This operation obliged J to create a number of link verses, namely 12, 9; 13, 1.3.4. This J redaction was also responsible for 12,2 – 3; 12, 6b; 13, 7b. 10b. 14a. Together with other historians of tradition Kilian identifies a number of elements coming from the Priestly (P) redactional activity: 12, 4b. 5; 13, 6. 11b. 12 ab . Finally, there remain two "nicht fixierbare Glossen" which are "she-asses and camels" in 12, 16 and "and his house" in 12, 17. For an evaluation of Kilian's reconstruction of the text's history of tradition consult Albert de Pury, *Prômesse Divine et Légende Cultuelle dans le cycle de Jacob Gen 28 et les traditions patriarchales*, I (Gabalda; Paris 1975) 47 – 85. Without entering into a detailed discussion of the single elements of this tradition-history or of the construction in its entirety may I remark that nothing thursts itself out of doorstep of the hypothetical. Cfr. Sternberg, *Poetics*, 13. 16.

4.   Cfr. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (Basic Books; New York 1981) 3 – 21.

5.   Wolfgang Kayser, "Qui raconte le roman?" *Poétique du Récit* (eds R. Barthes; W. Kayser; W.C. Booth; Ph. Hamon) (Points; Paris 1977) 71 (This essay appeared for the first time in W. Kayser, *Die Vortragsreise* (Francke Verlag; Bern 1958) 82 – 101.

6.   Ibid, 72.

as the authorial figure reflected in the writing. The person (the object of genetics) may be lost beyond recovery, but the persona (the object of poetics) is very much there, pervading and governing the narrative by virtue of qualification denied to his historical, quotidian, flesh and blood self anyway. Being two faces of the same entity — two modes of authorial existence — these are no more mutually exclusive than identical. Rather, they always remain distinct in principle, and so accordingly do the lines of inquiry oriented to them — the one concerned with the writer's features or portrait as an individual and the other with his portrait as an artist. Infact, they not only preserve but also redouble their essential distinctiveness amidst the mysteries that surround the formation of the Bible while leaving its art of communication in full view."[7] Moreover, since Wayne C. Booth's famous book *The Rhetoric of Fiction*[8] the subtle distinction between "implied author" and "narrator" (beside the "author" of course) is normally admitted. Booth discusses these distinctions again in an essay published in 1967.[9] "Even the novel in which no narrator is dramatised creates an implicit picture of an author who stands behind the scenes, whether as stage-manager, as puppeteer, or as an indifferent God, silently paring his fingernails. This implied author is always distinct from the "real man" — whatever we may take him to be — who creates a superior version of himself as he creates his work; any successful novel makes us believe in an 'author', who amounts to a kind of 'second self'. This second self is usually a highly refined and selected version, wiser, more sensitive, more perceptive than any real man could be. In so far as a novel does not refer directly to this author, there will be no distinction between him and the implied undramatised narrator."[10] "... Most tales are presented as passing through the consciousness of a teller, whether an 'I' or a 'he'. Even in drama much of what we are given is narrated by someone, and we are often as much interested in the effect on the narrator's own mind and heart as we are in learning what else the author has to tell us. . . . But even the most naive reader must recognise that something mediating and transforming has come into a story from the moment that the author explicitly places a narrator into the tale, even if he is given no personal characteristics whatever. One of the most frequent reading faults comes from a naive identification of such narrators with the authors who create them. But in fact there is always a distinction, even though the author himself may not have been aware of it as he wrote. The created author, the 'second self', is

---

7.   Sternberg, *Poetics,* 69.
8.   (University of Chicago Press; Chicago 1961).
9.   Wayne C. Booth, "Distance and Point-in-view: An essay in classification" *The Theory of the Novel* (ed. Ph. Stevick) (London/New York 1967) 87 – 107.
10.   Ibid., 92.

built up in our minds from our experience with all of the elements of the presented story.''[11] The implications of this discussion for our subject matter are easy to see: if the point-of-view that features more clearly in the text is that of the *narrator* how shall we arrive to that of the *author*? They may not coincide.

Other scholars, however, are aware that every literary text constitutes an act of communication involving a human decision that operates on both the semantic[12] as well as on the poetic[13] level. And this puts the *intentio auctoris* in the limelight. These scholars give the author's intention its due in the formation of a literary work without committing ''the intentional fallacy''[14] of attributing all the text's meaning to this intention.[15] Within the Catholic tradition there has long existed the debate about the so-called *sensus plenior* of biblical texts.[16] And the most authoritative of the Church's recent documents on the Bible, the *Dogmatic Constitution on*

11.   Ibid., 92 – 93. In the Bible ''... the implied author and the narrator to whom he delegates the task of communication practically merge into each other... The biblical narrator is a pleni-potentiary of the author, holding the same views, enjoying the same authority, addressing the same audience, pursuing the same strategy, self-effacement included... no ironic distance separates these figures of maker and teller. They stand and fall together. And since keeping the two apart yields no practical gain, I shall employ the more univocal term 'narrator' to refer to the master of the tale in general'' Sternberg, *Poetics*, 75.

12.   ''L'intenzione dell'autore è un atto della volontà sul linguaggio del quale determina il senso ... Con la propria intenzione egli precisa o delimita fra le molte possibiltà del linguaggio. Questa descrizione è valida se osserviamo dal basso il compito artigianale di ordinare parole. In realtà il processo inizia dal ricordo o dalla percezione globale che tende ad articolarsi in parole: è un processo di divisione che raccoglie a poco a poco vocaboli già delimitati, senza pensare a tutte le possibilità che tali parole o frasi offrono. L'autore ha assimilato il proprio vocabolario, gli schemi grammaticali ecc., nell'atto di esprimersi una forza configuratrice porta alla coscienza elementi del linguaggio con criteri selettivi.'' Luis Alonso Schökel, *Il dinamismo della Tradizione* (Paideia; Brescia 1970) 112 – 113.

13.   ''We sometimes forget that a story represents a narrator's choice.... just as the writing of history involves interpretation, so does telling a story. This is true both of stories which have a factual foundation and those which do not. Even when it reports actual events, a story represents a narrator's choice, for few events of our world are important enough to be remembered in story. The narrator also chooses how to tell the story. This choice will reflect the narrator's selective emphasis and values, and the story's composition helps to communicate the narrator's emphasis and evaluation to the reader... The narrator chooses the way which fits his purpose or limits his purpose to the narrative forms at his disposal, and so his purposes are mirrored by his stories'', Robert C. Tannehill, ''The Disciples in Mark: The Function of a Narrative Role'', *Journal of Religion* 57 (1977), 387 – 388.

14.   Cfr. W.K. Wimsatt/Monroe C. Beardsley, ''The Intentional Fallacy'' in *The Verbal Icon* (Noonday; New York 1958).

15.   Cfr. R. Wellek/A. Warren, *Theory of Literature* (England³ 1963) 42 – 43. ''... Nelle opere puramente umane l'intenzione dell'autore è il fattore primordiale ma non unico nella determinazione del senso. L'interprete deve ricercare l'intenzione dell'autore ma non se ne può accontentare'', Alonso Schökel, *Dinamismo*, 119. Cfr. Raymond E. Brown, *The Critical Meaning of the Bible* (Paulist Press; New York/Ramsey 1981) 30 – 33.

16.   For bibliography cfr. Henning Graf Reventlow, *Problems of Biblical Theology of the Twentieth Century* (SCM Press; London 1986) 37 – 47.

Divine Revelation, reflects this certainty of scholarship that the author's intention cannot explain everything in the text: "Cum autem Deus in Sacra Scriptura per homines more hominum locutus sit, interpres Sacrae Scripturae, ut perspiciat quid Ipse nobiscum communicare voluerit, attente investigare debet, *quid hagiographi reapse significare intenderint et eorum verbis manifestare Deo placuerit"* (article 12).[17]

This conciliar statement alludes to what christians hold as the transcendental dimension of the biblical text, inspiration, which is not simply an "institutional rule for writing and reading" providing the biblical narrator with the source of his omniscience[18], but a mysterious "Dei cum homine communitas laboris ad unum idemque opus conficiendum"[19] which christian theologians still labour to understand and explain.[20] This divine/human partnership in the composition of the Bible renders V.S. Poythress's[21] schema of verbal communications rather more complicated, since it involves at least two authorial perspectives[22] and it may entail two levels of meaning within the same textual reality, a *sensus humanus* and a *sensus divinus*[23] which are distinct though intimately related: ". . . quod auctores inspirati seu hagiographi asserunt, retineri debeat assertum a Spiritu Sancto."[24]

17.   *AAS* LVIII (5th November 1966) 823. For some commentary on this involved statement consult Alonso Schökel, *Dinamismo*, 107 – 119; Pietro Dacquino, *La Costituzione Dogmatica sulla Divina Rivelazione* (Elle DI CI: Collana Magistero Conciliare 3; Turin/Leumann 1967) 308 – 310.
18.   Contra Sternberg, *Poetics*, 81 – 85.
19.   Pope Benedict XV, *Spiritus Paraclitus*, 15th September 1920; *EB*, 448.
20.   Karl Rahner, *Inspiration in the Bible. Questions Disputatae* 1 (Herder & Herder: New York[2] 1964); Louis Alonso Schökel, *The Inspired Word* (trans. Francis Martin) (Herder & Herder; New York 1966); cfr. James T. Burtchaell, *Catholic Theories of Biblical Inspiration since 1810* (Cambridge University Press; Cambridge 1969); Valerio Mannucci, *Bibbia come Parola di Dio* (Queriniana; Brescia 1981) 121 – 188; Raymond F. Collins, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Doubleday & Company; Garden City, New York 1983) 317 – 355; Robert Gnuse, *The Authority of the Bible* (Paulist Press; New York/Mahwah 1985).
21.   "In a typical case of human verbal behaviour we find three elements (a) a speaker; (b) the discourse which he produces, and (c) the situation in which it is produced. To these three elements correspond three types of analysis, speaker analysis, discourse analysis and situational analysis. In the case of graphic material, of course, the first might be called author analysis and the second literary analysis", "Distinctions", 120.
22.   Cfr. Dom Célestin Charlier, *La Lettura Cristiana della Bibbia* (Edizioni Paoline; Rome[5] 1979) 305 – 314.
23.   Cfr. Alois Grillmeier, "The Divine Inspiration and the Interpretation of Sacred Scripture", *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, 3 (ed. Herbert Vorgrimler) (Burns & Oates/Herder & Herder; London/New York 1968) 238 – 239 for the relationship of the two *sensi*.
24.   *Dei Verbum* art 11; *AAS* LVIII (1966) 822 – 823. "Across all doctrinal boundaries, inspiration simply figures as an institutional rule for writing and reading; and it is more liable to questioning than the Bible's rules of grammar. . . To make sense of the Bible in terms of its own conventions, one need not believe in either, but one must postulate both. And to postulate inspiration is to elevate the narrator to the status of omniscent historian, combining two

The research for the *intentio auctoris* is, therefore, still relevant. But with an important qualification. "As interpreters of the Bible, our only concern is with 'embodied' or 'objectified' intention; and that forms a different business altogether, about which a wide measure of agreement has always existed. In my own view, such intention fulfills a crucial role, for communication presupposes a speaker who resorts to certain linguistic and structural tools in order to produce certain effects on the addressee; the discourse accordingly supplies a network of clues to the speaker's intention. In this respect, the Bible does not vary from any other literary or ordinary message except in the ends and the rules that govern the forms of communication. . . 'intention' no longer figures as a psychological state consciously or unconsciously translated into words. Rather it is a shorthand for the structure of meaning and effect supported by the conventions that the text appeals to or devises: for the sense that the language makes in terms of the communicative context as a whole." [25] And perhaps the best approach to the conventions that the text appeals to or devises in order to arrive at the structure of meaning and effect is literary analysis. [26]

2. In approaching Genesis 13 as a literary expression there exists a fundamental question to be asked. This question probably includes the entire set of queries which Gros Louis believes a literary critic should consider in approaching a work of literature: [27] how may one reach to its "embodied" or "objectified" intention? A question of method, therefore.

Source oriented approaches diagnose the narrative as the splicing of two narrative threads, J's and P's. [28] These identify the narrative's meaning(s) with that of its presumed sources. Claus Westermann accepts vv. 6.11b.12a as "eine literarische Parallele, die eine andere Konzeption voraussetzt, hochstwahrscheinlich P" [29] but when towards the end of his commentary over this chapter the exegete discusses the "Ziel" of the

otherwise irreconciliable postures or models: the constrained historian and the licensed fiction-maker," Sternberg, *Poetics* 81. The acknowledgement of biblical inspiration belongs to the category of faith, indeed; but as we have already stated, inspiration is not "an institutional rule for writing and reading". The explanation of the narrator's omniscience lies elsewhere.

25.   Sternberg, *Poetics* 9. Cfr. Wellek/Warren, *Theory*, 149.

26.   We adopt Robert Alter's definition for the scope of this study: "By literary analysis I mean the manifold varieties of minutely discriminating attention to the artful use of language, to the shifting play of ideas, conventions, tone, sound, imagery, syntax, narrative viewpoints, compositional units and much else," *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 12.

27.   "Methodological Considerations", 17 – 20.

28.   Not to mention the more articulate source analysis which distinguishes at least two strata within the J source, cfr. for instance C.A. Simpson, *The Early Traditions of Israel. A critical Analysis of the Pre-Deuteronomic Narrative of the Hexateuch* (Oxford 1948) 70.

29.   *Genesis* (BK 1/2; Düsseldorf 1981) 202.

narrative he seems to take into consideration only J's perspective.[30] Without entering the current debate about the validity of the so-called "Wellhausen hypothesis"[31] one may still remark that

(a) if such interweaving of sources did actually happen, P's "andere Konzeption" as the definitive "relecture" must have coloured the entire narrative;

(b) even if several fingers were involved in the making of this pie, "As far as the basic narrative traits and tactics that make up a storyteller's portrait are concerned, they all show an impressive family resemblance or, in diachronic terms, continuity: a unity of artistic persona in a variety of historical person."[32] This basically means unicity of authorial perspective as the text now stands.

Recently a number of *holistic approaches* appeared which refrain from reading Gen 13 without reference to its wider immediate context, the Abraham narrative.[33] Unfortunately these synchronic readings of the text tend towards summary and superficial exegesis of our narrative, unmindful of the minutae of its structural and literary make up. The result of these holistic approaches is that, notwithstanding the valid intuitions they offer here and there, what they say often hangs in mid-air and their criticism

30.   Cfr. ibid., 212. For similar source-oriented exegesis of this text we refer to Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis. A Commentary* (SCM Press; London 1972) 170 – 174; John Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition* (Yale University Press; New Haven/London 1975) 209 – 226 especially 221 – 226; Robert Davidson, *Genesis 12 – 50* (Cambridge Bible Commentary; Cambridge 1979) 26 – 30.
31.   To mention just a handful of authors engaged in the debate: R. Rendtorff, *Das überlieferungsgeschichtliche Problem des Pentateuch* (W. de Gruyter; Berlin/New York 1977): ibid., "The 'Yahwist' as Theologian. The Dilemma of Pentateuchal Criticism", *JSOT* 3 (1977) 2 – 45 which includes the responses from several authors; R. North, "Can Geography Save J from Rendtorff?" *Bib* 63 (1982) 47 – 55; V. Long, "Higher Criticism has Gone Bankrupt" *Homelitic and Pastoral Review* 83 (1, 1982) 50 – 57; A.H.J. Gunneweg, "Anmerkungen und Anfragen zur neueren Pentateuchforschung" *Theologische Rundschau* 48 (1983) 227 – 253; 50 (1985) 107 – 131; J.G. McConville, "The Pentateuch Today" *Themelios* 8 (3, 1983) 5 – 11; A.L. Nations, "Historical criticism and Current Methodological Crisis" *SJT* (1983) 59 – 71; A. Stock, "The limits of Historical Critical Exegesis", *BTB* 13 (1983) 28 – 31; S.L. Portnay/D.L. Peterson "Genesis, Wellhausen and the Computer. A Response", *ZAW* 96 (1984) 421 – 425. cfr. *ZAW* 94 (1982) 467 – 481, R. Rendtorff, "The Future of Pentateuchal Criticism", *Henoch* 6 (1984) 1 – 14; Y.T. Radday/H. Shore, *Genesis. An Authorship Study* (Biblical Institute Press; Rome 1985); J. Blenkinsopp, "The Documentary Hypothesis in Trouble", *Bible Review* 14 (1985) 22-32; R. Brown, "Historical Critical Exegesis and Attempts at Revisionism" *The Bible Today* 23 (1985) 157 – 165.
32.   Sternberg, *Poetics*, 71.
33.   I am referring particularly to Edwin M. Good, *Irony in the Old Testament* (The Almond Press; Sheffield² 1981) 81 – 114 especially 89 – 97; Kenneth R.R. Gros Louis, "Abraham I", "Abraham II", *Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives* (eds. K.R.R. Gros Louis/J.S. Ackerman) (Abingdon; Nashville 1982) 53 – 84; Robert L. Cohn, "Narrative Structure and Canonical Perspective", *JSOT* 25 (1983) 3 – 16; Larry R. Helyer, "The Separation of Abram and Lot: Its Significance in the Patriarchal Narratives" *JSOT* 26 (1983) 77 – 88.

nears rather "eisegesis'. We shall consider only Larry R. Helyer's essay on Gen 13.

Without bothering to examine in detail the various literary aspects of the text in question (except for its geographical perspective and the consequent self-exclusion of Lot from Canaan) Helyer devotes most of his essay (pp. 80 − 85) to a discussion on the relationship of Genesis 13 to the rest of the Abraham cycle. On the basis of David J.A. Clines' view of unicity of theme in the Pentateuch[34] and Walter Kaiser's emphasis on the centrality of the promise to Abraham in Genesis 12,1 − 3[35] the author arrives to the conclusion that the Abraham cycle is dominated by the theme of posterity "and more precisely with the question who will be Abraham's heir?" "Genesis 13, too centres on the problem of an heir."[36] He takes issue with the study of Walter Vogels, "Abraham et l'offrande de la terre (Gen 13)"[37] which saw the real heart of Genesis 13 as Abraham's willingness to sacrifice the land of Lot. Helyer considers Gen 13 as an "obstacle story"[38] narrating one of the setbacks to the fulfilment of God's promise of an heir to the patriarch.[39] From the importance accorded to Lot in the several reports in which he is mentioned in the introductory episodes of the Abraham narrative (11,27 − 12,9) the author arrives to the "probability that Lot was viewed by Abraham as his heir." Gen 13 narrates a crises because "Abram's heir-apparant virtually eliminates himself from the promise by leaving the land of promise, Canaan. Yet just at this juncture (after Lot had parted from him 13, 14) Yahweh reaffirms the promise of the land which will be given to Abrams offspring . . ."[40]

Helyer concludes: the primary purpose of Genesis 13 "is to draw attention to the crisis of faith which Lot precipitated by his choice of pasturage outside the land of Canaan. At stake is nothing less than Lot's elimination as heir to the covenant promise. Furthermore, this crisis provides its intended meaning within the entire Abraham cycle when it is seen as one of eight such crises which threaten the fulfilment of one aspect of the tripartite promise of Gen 12,1 − 3: 'I will make you into a great nation' (v.2). Thus the overall concern of the cycle is, Who will be Abraham's heir?"[41]

34.   *The Theme of the Pentateuch* (*JSOT* Supplement Series 10; Sheffield 1982) 20.
35.   *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Zondervan; Grand Rapids 1978) 35.84 − 99.
36.   "Separation", 81.
37.   *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 4 (1974 − 75) 51 − 57.
38.   "Separation" 80. This term is borrowed from Peter E. Ellis, *The Yahwist, the Bible's First Theologian* (Fides; Notre Dame 1968) 136.
39.   "Separation", 83.
40.   Ibid.
41.   "Separation", 85.

Three are the problems with Helyer's ingenuous explanation:

(a) that Lot is viewed by Abram of the Abraham narrative as his heir is only a *probability*, and at least another explanation is possible for the several references to his presence with Abram in his travelling;[42]

(b) Gen 13 itself drops no hint at all that it is interested in the problem of who was to be Abram's heir; Abram may have meant to have Lot to the north or to the south of Canaan, but whose perspective it is which reckons the five cities of the plain as not belonging to the land of Canaan: Abram's or the narrator's?

(c) The view that Genesis 13 constitutes one of eight crisis narratives that keep the Abraham narrative together has little to recommend it in the narrative's dynamics itself.[43]

3. The present author shares with holistic approaches to Scripture the view that no episode of the Abraham narrative in Genesis may be interpreted in sheer isolation from its present wider literary context.[44] But situating the single episodes within this vital context does not dispense the literary critic from starting with a detailed analysis of the text's morphology and syntax,[45] its structural orientation, perspective, characterization patterns, its literary dynamics in short. And this is the manner the writer of this essay means to examine Gen 13 in order to discover the *intentio auctoris*.

3.1 Structuralising Elements

A deep reading of the episode under study would reveal that a number of linguistic phenomena are of poetic significance:

(a) *Circumstantial Clauses.* Their number is relatively high considering the length of the episode: vv. 2. 5. 6. 7b. 12. 13. 14, and often they occur in close succession. What is their function within our text? "Circumstantial clauses serve a variety of functions: to indicate synchroneity, to introduce new characters or new episodes ... Now it

---

42. Cfr. for instance Gros Louis, "Abraham I", 53 – 57.

43. The hypothesis that the Abraham narrative is so structured that narratives about trials alternate with others about "divine communications of benison and promise" had already been proposed by Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis II, From Noah to Abraham* (Jerusalem 1964) 294 – 297. But the present author has suggested that this view tends to ignore the internal dynamics of the single episodes. Cfr. Anthony Abela, *Reading the Abraham Narrative in Gen 2,27 – 25, 18 as a literary Unit.* (Dissertation: Pontifical Biblical Institute; Rome 1985) 2 – 3.

44. Cfr. Anthony Abela, "Genesis 15: A Non-Genetic Approach" *Melita Theologica* XXXVII (1986) 14.

45. Whatever insights one may shear from Gros Louis's "Abraham I" into the psychology of Lot and Abraham, one may not loose sight of the fact that the author worked on a translation not on the Hebrew text (p. 9). And this is a basic short-coming.

appears that in addition to these functions, certain circumstantial clauses also indicate point of view. This is true even in the absence of a verb of perception and or hinneh.''[46] *We'abrām kābēd mᵉ od bammiqneh bakkesep ûbazzāhāb* (v.2) remarks the narrator. This circumstantial clause comes after a chain construct which narrates how Abram returned with all his belongings and relatives *mimmisrayim* towards the Negeb (v.1). Gen 13, 1 with its main verb *wayyaᶜal* that contrasts with the *wayyēred* of Gen 12, 10[47] is often considered as the conclusion to the previous episode as well as a passage to the following one.[48] This would leave the function to introduce the new episode to verse 2. From this verse we expect a narrative in which Abraham's belongings play some part. The next circumstantial clause which is separated from the first by a series of action words and geographical information (vv. 3 – 4) deals with riches as well: *wegam lᵉlôṭ hahōlēk ᵓet ᵓabrām hāyāh ṣōᵓn ûbāqār wᵉᵓōhālîm* (v.5). The adverbial particle *wᵉgam* adds emphasis to the information imparted and confirms the intuition sheared from v.2 that this narrative concerns the characters' property. Through *wᵉgam* this second circumstantial clause recalls the first one.

The following circumstantial clause (v.6) is more complicated. It consists of a bicolon comprising two *wᵉlōᵓ*clauses revolving around an explicative *kî* clause. The two *wᵉlōᵓ*clauses are perfect parallels with identical endings: *lā šebet yahdāw*; the subjects of the two clauses are different: *hāᵓāres* in the first clause with the verb *nasāᵓ*[49] qualified by *wᵉlōᵓ* included in the verb *yakᵉlû*. The *kî* clause has *rᵉkûšam* for subject, pointing back to both Abram and Lot. Expressed graphically the complex would figure something like this:

(a) *wᵉlōᵓnāśāᵓᵓōtām hāᵓāres lāšebet yahdāw*

(b)   *kî hāyāh rᵉkûšām rāb*

(c) *wᵉlōᵓ yākᵉlû   lāšebet yahdāw*

Verbatim and non-verbatim repetition in this complex is meant to emphasize that Abram and Lot could not settle together any longer.[50] The *aba* pattern

46.   Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Almond Press; Sheffield 1983) 63; Cfr. F.I. Andersen, *The Sentence in Biblical Hebrew* (Mouton; The Hague 1974) 77 – 91.

47.   Cfr. G.R. Driver, "OrᶜLH 'went up country' and YRD 'went down country'''*ZAW* 69 (1957) 74 – 77.

48.   Cfr. George W. Coats, *Genesis with an Introduction to Narrative Literature*, I, *The Forms of the Old Testament Literature* (William B. Eerdmans; Grand Rapids, Michigan 1983) 116.

49.   The Samaritan version suggested we parse *hāᵓāres* as feminine and amend the verb to *naśᵉᵓuh*. Cfr. *KBH*. But in view of *ᵓeres*'s possibility to be also of masculine gender, cfr. Ez 21,24, the present MT ought to be retained Cfr. *BDB*, 75b.

50.   On the use of repetition for emphasis cfr. Alter, *Art*, 77; Berlin, *Poetics*, 65 – 66.

draws attention to the one factor which rendered common settlement impossible, *rᵉkûšam*, their possessions. The three indirect references to Abram and Lot together with the global expression *rᵉkûšam* to include vv. 2.5, mark the anaphoric character of the statement in verse 6. Here we have a "summary subscript"[51] to close a sub-unit within this episodic extension. This conclusion is confirmed by the presence at the head of the following sentence of introductory *wayhî* (v.7).[52]

In the seven verses that come next (vv. 7 – 13) we encounter two participial clauses and a circumstantial clause without the conjunction *wᵉ*. After we have been told of the quarrel between Abram's and Lot's herdsmen we read this unexpected comment: *wᵉhakkᵉnaᶜanî wᵉhappᵉrizzî yōšēb bāᵓāreṣ* (v. 7b). This clause follows the *wayhî* clause, while the construct chain is resumed in the succeeding sentence: *wayyōᵓmer*. More than anything else we have here an interruption of the narration flow by the narrator to sandwich his own commentary on what he narrates.[53]

Another clause which breaks the narration is found in verse 13. Here again we read a value judgement about people who are not at all involved in the narrative dynamics of our text: *wᵉansê sᵉdôm raᶜîm wᵉhaṭṭaᵓîm laYhwh mᵉᵓōd*. This clause comes after we have been told that Lot settled (*yašab*) among the cities of the valley and moved his tents *ᶜad sᵉdôm* while Abraham *yašab bᵉᵓeres kᵉnaᶜan* (v.12). Two observations can be made:

(i) In as much as the narrator's comment in verse 13 is attached to the place name *sᵉdôm* found immediately preceding it, we may not read verse 13 without verse 12.

(ii) Verse 12 itself is a circumstantial verbal clause without the introductory *wᵉ*. It looks explicatory to a previous statement about the two relatives being separated after the departure of Lot to his new settlement area (v. 11a): *wayyippardû îs mēᶜalᵓāḥîw* (v. 11b). So that verse 12 carries the characteristics of a summary to which a commentary by the narrator is inserted (v. 13). After these two verses we should expect a new beginning.

The new beginning is marked by a circumstantial clause that also introduces a new character, *Yhwh: waYhwhᵓāmar ᵓel ᵓabrāmᵓaḥᵃrê hippā red lôt mēᶜimmô* (v.14): "Larger sections can be marked by the introduction of a new character. Frequently this involves the use of a circumstantial

51. On summary subscripts cfr. D.W. Baker, "Diversity and unity in the literary structure of Genesis" in *Essays on the Patriarchal Narratives* (eds. A.R. Millard/D.J. Wiseman) (Leicester 1980) 196.

52. On the role of *wayhî* to introduce new sentences or new paragraphs cfr. Baker, "Diversity and unity", 191 – 192, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* (ed. K. Kautzsch) (Clarendon Press; Oxford² 1910, 1980) § 111 f – h.

53. This is known as "breaking frame" which is quite common in biblical narrative. Cfr. R. Polzin, *Moses and the Deuteronomist. A Literary Study of the Deuteronomic History* (Seabury; New York 1980) 30 – 31; Berlin, *Poetics*, 57 – 58. 99; Sternberg, *Poetics*, 120.

clause, i.e. one which breaks the ordinary Hebrew narrative prose chain . . . .
Commonly this is done by inserting the subject, which generally follows the
predicate in Hebrew prose, between the word-consecutive and the verb.''[54]
The time indication about the moment *Yhwh* started to communicate with
Abram confirms that here a new narrative sub-unit is envisaged.[55]

From what we have been saying it is easy to note how several of the
circumstantial clauses play significant structuralising roles within Gen 13 as
a narrative unit. The circumstantial clauses in vv. 2.14 are meant to introduce
two sub-units while those in vv. 6.12 – 13 feature as concluding summaries
to separate sub-units. Gen 13 would thus appear as a tripartite structured
narrative unit made up of:

(i) VV. 2 – 6 in which only the narrative voice is heard and which
furnish the reader with the necessary information to understand the
ensueing story: we shall call this with George W. Coats[56] the narrative's
exposition;[57]

(ii) VV. 7 – 13: here, besides the narrative voice, we hear Abram talking
while we are ensured that Lot is ''on scene'' even though he simply listens to
what his uncle has to say. As a result of what Abram says, Lot ''acts'', he
chooses his separate settlement area and moves to his new grounds;

(iii) VV. 14 – 18: in this unit we encounter a new character, *Yhwh*, who
does the speaking while Abram listens in silence. Towards the end of
the unit Abram ''acts'', he strikes his tent and goes to settle in the south of
Palestine where he engages in religious activities. We shall call vv. 7 – 13
and vv. 14 – 18 ''scenic units.''[58]

(b) *Leitwörter or Key-words.* Increasing attention is being paid in
modern research on biblical narrative to the use of *Leitwörter* or key-words.
''A *Leitword* is a word or word-root that recurs significantly in a text, in a

54.   Baker, ''Diversity and Unity'' 192; cfr. Andersen, *Sentence*, 77 – 78.
55.   Cfr. Baker, ''Diversity and Unity'', 190 – 192.
56.   *Genesis*, 116; von Rad ignores the structuralising role in v. 6 and draws the demarcation
line of the introductory sub-unit after verse 7, cfr. *Genesis,* 170 – 171.
57.   ''The paradigmatic biblical story. . . starts with a few brief statements that name the
principal character or characters, locate them geographically, identify significant family
relationships, and in some instances provide a succint moral, social, or physical characterization
of the protagonist. . . . the opening exposition, then, is pretemporal, statistically enumerating
data that are not bound to a specific moment in time: they are facts that stand before the time
of the story proper'' Alter, *Art,* 80; cfr. Jacob Licht, *Storytelling in the Bible* (The Magnes
Press; Jerusalem 1978) 28.
58.   This tripartite division of the text, based upon fine though visible demarcation elements,
differs from the one proposed by Coats except for the first part, the exposition. Coats
distinguishes also three parts in this episode: I Itinerary (v. 1), II Narrative body (vv. 2 – 17),
III Itinerary (v. 18). ''This unit is framed by itinerary notices (vv. 1, 18) each somewhat
extrinsic to the unity of the whole'' *Genesis*, 116. The narrative body in turn is made up of
A, Exposition (vv. 2 – 6), B, Complication (v. 7); C, Denouement (vv. 8 – 17). This structuring
ignores the role that the circumstantial clauses are playing within the narrative as a whole.

continuum of texts, or in a configuration of texts: by following these repetitions, one is able to decipher or grasp a meaning of the text, or at any rate, the meaning will be revealed more strikingly. The repitition. . . . need not be merely of the word itself but also of the word-root; in fact, the very difference of words can often intensify the dynamic action of the repitition. . . . The measured repetition that matches the inner rhythm of the text, or rather, that wells up from it, is one of the most powerful means for conveying meaning without expressing it.''[59] Beside other uses, *Leitwörter,* therefore, function as unifying elements and as pointers to the semantic direction. In our text two may be considered as key-words, the term *ha ares*, ''the land'', occuring no less than eight times in significant points within the narrative, and the verb PRD in its niphal form, ''to separate oneself from'', with composite preposition *mēʿal* qualifying the person from whom the subject separates himself.

U. Cassuto[60] has already noted that the use of *hā āres* as a thematic key-word. Significantly the word occurs for the first time in the concluding statement of the exposition: v.6 which states that their possessions made common settlement impossible:

wᵉlō nāśā ōtam hā āres lāsebet yahdāw

The way of *wᵉlō* carries a consecutive sense because this statement rests on what the narrator has been saying about the huge possessions of both Abram and Lot (vv. 2.5):

''so that the land could not support both of them dwelling together'' (*RSV*)

In the third part of this statement, when we read *wᵉlō yakᵉlû lasebet yahdaw*, is the narrator insinuating that the two personages themselves are conscious of overpopulating the land with their herds? In other words, in repeating basically what he said in the first statement, is the narrator considering the issue from the characters' point of view?[61] Whosoever the perspective in verse 6b, the narrator informs us that the initial situation of the narrative is one of tension because Abram's and Lot's belongings made living together an impossible task for the land could not support them dwelling together.

The first scenic unit (vv. 7 – 13) can boast of no less than four presences

---

59.   Martin Buber, *Werke,* II, *Schriften zur Bibel* (Munich/Heidelberg 1964) 1131. The translation is owed to Alter, *Art,* 93. On the use of the keywords cfr. Alter, *Art,* 91 – 95. 179 – 180; Berlin, *Poetics,* 105.
60.   *Genesis,* 368.
61.   On the use of repetition in biblical narrative to express different points of view cfr. Berlin, *Poetics,* 72 – 82.

of the word ʾeres. Twice it features in composite phrases to indicate geo-graphical units: in verse 10 the tract of land leading to Zoar is compared to the lush delta of the Nile: keʾeres miṣrayim, while in verse 12 we are told ʾabrām yāšab beʾeres kenaʿan as Lot settled among (be) the cities of the valley. In the other two instances ʾeres is not qualified for identification; yet from the context we know that "the land" stands for Canaan. In the aside comment[62] of the narrator in v. 7b we read that the quarrel between the herdsmen of the two relatives took place when "the Canaanite and the Perizzite" ʾāz yōšēb bāʾāres. This quarrel (rîb) rendered the precarious situation of Abram's clan explosive and an early solution was called for. Abram proposes separate settlements:

> hălōʾ kol hāʾāres lepānèkā
> hippāred nāʾ mēʿālāy   (v.9)[63]

This superficial analysis of the word ʾeres in this scenic unit already allows an insight into the complexity of the theme involved. Why does the narrator remind us of the Canaanite and Perizzite occupation of the land as soon as he mentions the quarrel between Lot's and Abram's herdsmen? Is it to enhance its inadequacy to provide for their herds if they are left to graze together?[64] The grammar of verse 10 shows that the comparison of the Zoar region to Yhwh's garden and keʾereṣ miṣrayim belongs to the narrator's not to Lot's perspective.[65] But why should he compare this area of Zoar to two places already met with within the Genesis narrative? Is this reference to Yhwh's garden inviting us "to consider the patterns that have been estab-lished in the first eleven chapters of Genesis?"[66] The entire land of Canaan has been promised to Abraham by Yhwh (12, 7). Is the patriarch trespassing

---

62.   Cfr. Westermann, *Genesis*, 205 – 206.
63.   For the geographical perspective involved. cfr. Helyer, "Separation", 79 – 80.
64.   Cfr. the comment of Rashi of Troyes on *wayhî rîb*: "Essa avvenne perchè i pastori di Lot erano malvagi, e conducevano al pascolo il loro bestiame nei campi altrui. I pastori di Abram li rimproverarono per questo loro furto, ma essi replicarono: 'Il paese è stato dato ad Abram; siccome egli non ha eredi, sarà Lot il suo erede. Di conseguenza, il nostro non è affatto un furto!' Ma la scrittura dice subito dopo: I Cananei e i Perizzei abitavano allora nel paese: Abram non aveva dunque ancora alcun diritto su di esso'" Rashi di Troyes, *Commento alla Genesi* (Marietti; Casale Monferrato 1985) 92. For similar interpretations in other Jewish writings cfr. *Genesi* (Biblia AT I; Gribaudi; Turin 1986) 195. But were these moralising interpretations in the narrator's mind? Is the narrator here being mimetic of the life conditions for the patriarchal period. (Cfr. von Rad, *Genesis*, 170 – 171; Westermann, *Genesis*, 205 – 206)? But if so why should he choose to narrate only the definitive solution to the quarrel (cfr. Westermann, *Genesis*, 206)?
65.   Contra Gros Louis, "Abraham I", 56. The Lot of the Abraham narrative cannot echo and foreshadow the experience of Sodom's and Gomorrah's destruction. The narrator stops the narrative flow to insert his own comment on the fertility of the area to be chosen by Lot.
66.   Cfr. Gros Louis, "Abraham I", 54.

his rights in suggesting to divide it with Lot his newphew?[67] But is he proposing to divide the land at all? Why should *Yhwh* await the departure of Lot (v. 14) to solemnly promise to give to Abram *kol hāʾāreṣ ʾăšer ʾattāh rōʾeh* (v. 15). (One should note how this *kol hāʾāreṣ* here recalls the *kol hāʾāreṣ* of v. 9 where Abram invites Lot to choose his grazing area from *kol hāʾāreṣ* which was in front of him). And finally why should the narrator insist so much of Lot's and Abram's respective settlement (vv. 11 – 12)? Does he mean to contrast *ʾereṣ kᵉnaᶜan* to *ᶜārîm hakkikkār*? There is one statement that can be made at this stage of our inquiry: the first scenic unit deals with the land theme.

The second unit consists mainly of *Yhwh*'s promise address to Abram. The term *ʾereṣ* features thrice in this short speech, but only twice does it refer to the "land of Canaan". The first instance of the term features within the *kî* clause (v. 15) that is meant to explain *Yhwh*'s invitation (*nāʾ*) to Abram to raise his eyes and look into the distance from the spot he was on (v. 14). *Yhwh* declares that *kol hāʾāreṣ ʾăšer ʾattāh rōʾeh* was to be his gift (*ʾetnennāh*) to the patriarch and his progeny forever *ᶜad ᶜôlām*. One may easily ask why should the narrator mention Abram's progeny at this point. Not only that. The narrator insists upon this progeny and its numberlessness (v. 16). These descendants of Abraham were to be numerous *kaᶜapar hāʾāreṣ* (v. 16a) here mentioned for the incapacity of enumeration (v. 16b). *Yhwh*'s speech ends with an invitation to Abram to travel *baʾareṣ* through and through *(lᵉʾorkah ûlᵉroḥbāh)* because *lᵉkā ʾetnennāh* (v. 17). No doubt the theme of *Yhwh*'s speech is that of the land, but it is interweaved with that of posterity. There is room for another question. Why should the narrator insist so much upon Abram's personal involvement in this gift-receiving of the land? *Yhwh* insists that *lᵉkā ʾetnennah ûlᵉzarᶜăka ᶜad ᶜolam* (v. 15), *kî lᵉkaʾetnennah* (v. 17). Why is God not content with promising the land simply to Abram's descendants?

The term PRD in its niphal form is found only three times in the entire narrative. It is Abram who pronounces the word for the first time when quarrelling breaks out between Abram's and Lot's herdsmen (v. 7). Abrams is actually an invitation (*nāʾ*) and this separation is meant to avoid quarelling (*mᵉrîbāh*) between the two relatives *kîʾănāšîm ʾāhîm ʾănāhnû* (v. 8). Lot follows his uncle's instructions, he chooses the Jordan valley and moves his tents to his new settlement; the narrator then remarks *wayyippardû ʾiš meᶜal ʾaḥîw* (v. 11). One should notice that here we do not find a perfect command-execution sequence wherein normally the same verb is employed in both command and execution (cfr Gen 12,1.4; 22,1 – 3). Besides, we

---

67. This is what Walter Vogels states in his article, "Lot in His Honour Restored. A Structural Analysis of Gen 13, 2 – 18", *Église et Theologie* 10 (1979) 5 – 12.

should see whether this clause constitutes a global description of Lot's initiative and whether for a while the narrator is adopting Abram's perspective, or that of both Lot and Abram, since Abram insists that quarrelling between them is out of place *kî ʾănāšîm ʾāhîm ʾănāhnû*. While the theme of separation of relatives must be considered basic to the first scenic unit,[68] what is important for this *Leitwört* is that it serves as link-word[69] between the first and second scenic unit: *Yhwh* spoke to Abram *ʾāhărê hippāred lôt mēʿimmô* (v. 14). The question about *Yhwh*'s motivation for breaking the silence only with Lot's departure is intrigueing enough.[70] But the query to make at this stage is whether the narrator is expressing his own perspective or only that of Abram when he changes the formulation or the separation statement from that of verse 11.

(c) *The two scenic units: parallels and contrasts.* That the narrator purposely makes *Yhwh* deliver his promise speech to Abram *after* Lot's departure, testifies to his intention of building two scenic units. The "narrative mode of the Hebrew Bible is predominantly scenic. . . The scenic manner focusses the reader's attention on the more dramatic and significant events, it causes a dearth of description and comment, and leads to indirect characterization by speech and action."[71] What events does the narrator mean to focus upon? What is he indirectly saying about the characters that take part in the narrative dynamics? The present writer has already drawn attention to a number of conscious parallels and contrasts between the two scenes;[72] in this essay he means to enter into a deeper analysis in order to bring out better both parallels and contrasts. For the sake of simplicity we shall label scenic unit one (vv. 7 – 13) as (a) and scenic unit two (vv. 14 – 18) as (b).

(i) Both scenic units contain one speech introductory formula. In (a) we read *wayyōʾmer ʾabrām ʾel lôt* (v. 8) while (b) opens with the formula *waYhwhʾāmarʾel ʾabrām* (v. 14). Besides the formal differences of addressers and addressees due to the context, the only significant variation concerns the verb's form. In (a) the formula forms part of a narrative chain introduced by *wayhî* in verse 7. The fact that Abram should speak and take the initiative is seen as a matter of fact. This seems to correspond to the narrator's intuition in assuming the personages' point of view in v. 6b, that

68. Cfr. ibid.
69. On link-words cfr. Dionisio Mínguez, *Pentecostés. Ensayo de Semiótica narrativa en Hch 2* (Biblical Institute Press; Rome 1976) 25 – 26.
70. "Finchè l'empio Lot stava con Abram, la parola di Dio si teneva lontana da lui" Rashi, *Commento*, 94. Is this what the narrator means to say? Is he seeing in Lot a paradigm of wickedness?
71. Licht, *Storytelling* 50.
72. Abela, *Reading,* 21. 206 – 209.

the two patriarchs were themselves conscious that they could not continue to live together.[73] The translation of verse 7b by the *New English Bible* is to be preferred because it conforms to this awareness of the personages as to the state of tension within the clan: "... and there were quarrels between Abram's herdsmen and Lot's."

In (b) the speech formula marks an abrupt introduction of a new word-event as well as of a new speaker: *Yhwh*. As if *Yhwh*'s address reaches Abram as a surprise. The narrator ignores completely the question as to how *Yhwh*'s word reaches Abram, and concentrates on the subject-matter of this promise speech. One may ask how is it that in 12,7 the narrator describes *Yhwh*'s communication as a vision while in our text, where God's speech is much more articulate, no word is spent upon the modality of *Yhwh*'s intervention.

(ii) The personages. The two scenic units conform to the canon of biblical narrative of allowing normally two characters on scene.[74] In each unit we have a speaker and a listener who does no talking at all. In (a) Abram addresses Lot who listens in silence while in (b) it is *Yhwh* who speaks with Abram doing the listening. In each case, however, the character who listens is reported towards the end of the scene as changing settlement area. When Abram finishes with what he has to say Lot moves "towards the east"; likewise the end of *Yhwh*'s speech is marked by Abram's striking his camp, travelling towards Hebron and settling *be* elonê mamre .[75] One should notice that *Yhwh* as personage is treated just like Abram in (a): both speak, their speech is rather an invitation (the presence of particle *na* in both speeches), no description is provided by narrator of either character, and no circumstantial information is imparted. The two speak when an event involving somebody out of scene happens: Abram intervens as expected when quarrelling between herdsmen threatens to worsen the situation while *Yhwh* delivers his speech when Lot separates from Abram. The narrator's decision to leave out any circumstantial information of the speakers may

73. This would lend weight to Westermann's exegesis which do not read in Abram's behaviour an example of generosity and magnanimity. (cfr. Bruce Vawter, *On Genesis. A new Reading* (New York 1977) 183; E.A. Speiser, *Genesis* (Anchor Bible 1; New York 1964 98); Abram was obliged to find peaceful solution to the quarrelling that broke out and to provide adequate grazing space for their cattle. The future of his clan hanged upon his taking the right initiative. Cfr. *Genesis*, 206 and Vogels, "Lot in His Honour Restored", 5 – 6. 11 – 12.

74. Cfr. Hermann Gunkel, **Genesis** (HKAT 1,1; Göttingen 1901) Einleitung XXII – XXIII; William McKane, *Studies in the Patriarchal Narratives* (The Handsel Press; Edinburgh 1979) 31 – 32; Licht, *Storytelling*, 38.

75. Contra Coats, *Genesis*, 116 where he writes that while verse 18 meshes relatively well with the instructions in v. 17, yet the "relationship is superficial and does not contribute substantially to the unity of the text".

explain the absence of total information about the modality of *Yhwh*'s speaking.[76]

(iii) The speeches by the main characters and the reactions of the secondary characters. The two scenic units are made up of discourse and narration, of direct speech by the main character in each scene, who alone does the speaking, and of reports about action carried out by the secondary characters who in each unit do the listening. Besides, in (a) we encounter three direct interventions by the narrator who enters the scene to comment first about the historical background of the quarrelling within Abram's and Lot's clan (v. 7b); halfway within the scene he interrupts the narration flow again to inform us about the state of the Zoar neighbourhood before it got devasted by God (v. 10b); to the end of the scene we meet the narrator once more to tell of Abram's and Lot's respective settlements (v. 12). This means that scenic unit one is heavily characterized by the presence of the narrator who feel he should "break the frame" to allow the reader a wider perspective than that of the characters. No such explicit comment is to be found in scenic unit two; but we should not forget that pure, objective narration constitutes the vehicle for the narrator's point of view[77] so that the absence of direct, explicit commentary by the narrator should not be taken as indicators of no commentary at all.

In both units the principal feature is the speech of the main character. The two speeches carry the inclusive phrase *kol hā āres* and in each the land theme plays a significant role. However Abram's speech in (a) revolves around the problem of unity and division within his clan. The initial harmony and unity within the clan (v. 1) began to crack owing to the narrowness of the land (vv. 2.6) until tension mounted (v. 7) and division is proposed by Abram as the only adequate solution to the problem (vv. 8 – 9). *Hippāred nā mēᶜālāy* epitomizes the entire speech. The land which lay in front of the two relatives could help to institutionalize the division (v. 9b).[78] In the second scenic unit the land theme occupies the first place: its numerical presence (four times) within this speech is already an indication. While in (a) Abram considers "all the land" as from hence divided between *hassᵉmō l* and *hāyyāmîn* (v. 9b), in (b) *Yhwh* tends to see the land as a unity: *sāpōnāh wanegbāh wāqēdmāh wāyāmmāh* (v. 15).[79] But one may

76. On God as a personage cfr. Sternberg, *Poetics*, 153 – 159.
77. Cfr. Berlin, *Poetics*, 64.
78. Cfr. Vogels, "Lot in his Honour Restored", 7 – 9.
79. Ibid., 10 – 11. "Abram is in harmony with God in the beginning of the narrative and rediscovers this same harmony at the end. The transformation in the story starts with the disrupture of harmony, a dispute, which Abram wants to solve by division, but which God solves by unity." But one should note that the unity that has been achieved towards the end of the narrative is not identical with that of the beginning where we read that as Abram returned to Canaan from Egypt *wᵉiôi ᶜimmô* (v. 1).

ask whether by insisting that *Yhwh*'s speech is delivered *᾿aḥårê hippáred lôt mē᷾immô* (v. 14a) the narrator intimates that the unity of the land as a gift is achieved with the departure of Lot "from the land" *miqqedem*.

Narration consists mainly of objective reporting of actions carried out by the secondary characters in each scene. Similarity of global patterns: speech by main characters plus change of settlement by secondary characters, is evident. Yet significant variations exist. In (a) Lot is the subject of two verbs of perception: Abram's invitation to separate (vv. 8 – 9) is followed by a report which includes this information: *wayyiśśā᷾ lôt ᷾et ᷾ēnāw wayyar᷾ ᷾et kol kikkar hayyarden* (v. 10). These two actions of Lot succeed Abram's demonstration of the land: *hålō᷾ kol hā᷾āres lᵉpānēkā* (v. 9a). One should notice that the same two verbs in the same order open *Yhwh*'s speech to Abram: the mood is imperative and express an invitation (the presence of deprecative *nā᷾): śā᷾ nā᷾ ᷾ēnēka ûr᷾eh:* the object of the two correlated verbs is not expressed: instead we have the four directional words north, south, east and west (v. 14b): the real object is *kol hā āres* governed in the text sentence by the indicative᷾*attāh rō᷾eh* (v. 15). The presence of this pair of verbs in both scenic units, once in narration (a) and then in discourse (b) is bound to be of some semantic relevance.

Apart from these two verbs of perception which have Lot for subject, most verbs in both units belong to the categories of movement and settlement. In (a) we read *wayyiśśā᷾ lôt miqqedem* (v. 11) and *wayye᷾ ẽhal ᷾ad sᵉdōm.* [80] In (b) we are told that *wayye᷾ẽhal᷾abram wayyābō᷾ wayyēšeb bᵉ᷾elōnê mamrē᷾*All these verbs describe the secondary characters' reaction to the main characters' speech in each scene. However Lot and Abram are each subject of a verb found only in that scene which includes the narration of their actions. Lot's raising his eyes and seeing (considering) the Jordan Valley (v. 10a) is succeeded (besides the narrator's comment in v. 10b) by another action-word: *wayyibhar lô lôt ᷾et kol kikkar hayyardēn* (v. 11a) "So Lot chose for himself all the Jordan valley" (*RSV*). The point to make is that Lot chooses his settlement area: this explains his being the subject of the two perception verbs. Abram instead does not choose his land: he is going to receive it. Twice *Yhwh* declares in (b) his intention to make of the land his particular gift to Abram himself and to his descendants (vv. 15.17). This explains both his invitation to raise eyes and see *kol hā᷾āres* in its physical reality (the four directional points) (v. 14) and to travel the land *lᵉ᷾orkāh ûlᵉroḥbāh* (v. 17), that is to possess it.[81]

It is to this point that the narrative has been leading, to this contrast in the relationship to the land. Abram does not choose "his land", he receives

---

80. We are not counting *wayyippardû* (v. 11) which refers to both Abram and Lot.
81. D. Daube, *Studies in Biblical Law* (Cambridge 1947) 37 – 38. Cfr. von Rad, *Genesis*, 173; Westermann, *Genesis*, 211.

it as a gift, and this explains how as soon as he settles (*wayyēšeb*) in the Hebron area the first characteristic action of Abram is *wayyeben šām mizbēaḥ lā Yhwh* (v. 18).[82]

3.2   A non-genetic re-reading of Genesis 13

What is the narrator saying? How is he telling what he wishes to communicate? These two questions belong together and ought to be answered together.

(a) The first significant element which attracts attention is the opening circumstantial clause which interrupts the narration flow. Technically this is called "inversion".[83] This grammatical feature helps the narrator to put in the limelight some detail pertinent to the context which might pass unobserved. In our case Abram's riches are focused upon. But the fact that the narrator stops his narration for a short while to draw the reader's attention upon this element, already hints to his intention of narrating the following episode as part of a longer story. Scholarship has correctly depicted Gen 13, 1 as a transition piece[84] with its tentacles feeling both backward and forward. With reference to the proceeding episode the report mentions Abram's point of departure (*mimmisrayim*), the presence of his wife (*wᵉᵓištô*) and his property in its entirety (*kol*). But there is an element which has not appeared in 12,10 − 20, Lot, whom the narrator mentions, therefore, in view of the ensueing episode: *wᵉlôt ᶜimmô*[85] It is essential to notice that the sentence construction seems intentional to treat Lot as not belonging to Abram's household; *hûᵓ wᵉᵓištô wᵉkolᵓ ᵓašer lô wᵉlôt ᶜimmô* Lot comes to Canaan *with* Abram, but he does not strictly speaking belong to his household.

(b) The narrator's intention somehow to distinguish between Abram and Lot becomes evident in the narrative's exposition (vv. 2 − 6). Instead of one statement about the possessions of the two characters, the narrator makes two, one for each patriarch (vv. 2.5). He even emphasizes their distinction by (i) formulating differently the statements about their wealth: in the comparison Abram comes out the winner because he *kābēd mᵉᵓōd* (v.2) (no such intensifying elements in the Lot statement in v. 5); (ii) listing different items of possessions: while Lot's possessions are primarily

---

82.   The building of the altar in 13, 18 would appear thus as a response to *Yhwh*'s gift of the land, as thanksgiving rather than as symbolic appropriation, contra W. Zimmerli, *1 Mose 12 − 25: Abraham* (ZBK 1,2; Zurich 1976) 33.

83.   Cfr. Kilian, *Abrahamsüberlieferungen*, 17 − 18.

84.   Cfr. Westermann, *Genesis*, 202 − 203; Coats, *Genesis*, 116.

85.   Source-oriented exegesis often treated this note as a gloss, cfr. Westermann, ibid; other approaches read in this phrase the preparation for what follows where Lot plays an important role. Cfr. Cassuto, *Genesis*, 362 − 363.

pastoral, Abram's riches includes *kesep ûzāhāb*. Silver and gold play no role in the narrative dynamics of the story which is being introduced; so what's the narrator's point in mentioning them now if not for the sake of contrast? But there is another indirect way which the narrator employs to demonstrate that his main interest stands with Abram. Once he makes his introductory statement about Abram's possession, the narrator takes up the narrative thread to transfer Abram from the Negeb on to the scene of what is going to happen: *wayyelek ᵉmassa ᶜaw minnegeb* (v. 3a). There follows a scrupulous identification of the place of encampment:

(a) *weᶜad bêt ēl*

(b) *ᶜad hammāqōm   aser hayah sām   oholōh battēhillah*

(a′) *bēn bêt el ûbên haᶜay*

(d′) *' el mᵉqôm hammizbeah 'ăšer ᶜăśah šam bāri'šōnāh*

The symmetrical arrangement aba'b' is clear: the final pair a'b' adds some information over the pair ab. It is obvious that the narrator identifies Abram's former place of encampment and that of his liturgical activity. The aba'b' pattern helps him to distinguish between the two. There must be some reason for his emphasis upon separate location of the two activities. Is he simply echoing 12,8? But in this latter text there is no mention of separate localization for the encampment and for the building of the altar, as we find here. Therefore the narrator means to distinguish between the two: the parrellel adverbial phrases *battᵉhillah* and *bari sonah* point to this desire of the narrator. The reason for this desire may be gleaned from the next clause *wayyiqrù sam abram bᵉsem Yhwh*.

Several authors read this clause as continuation of b', recalling 12,8, and translate the verb with the pluperfect (cfr *NEB*); the present writer prefers the opinion of those who parse *wayyiqrā* as main verb: "and there Abram called on the name of the Lord" (*RSV*). By way of confirmation one may quote the repetition of the personage's name *abrām*, which strictly speaking is not necessary for the context. This clause does not enter the pattern aba'b' and is to be read in series with *wayyelek* of v. 3a. Since this main clause stands within the narrative's exposition one should consider it as essential for understanding the episode itself.

When the narrator comes to Lot and reports that also he (*wᵉgam*) was rich, he has no further information to add. One may explain away this lack of attention as a blackout of traditional material.[86] Another solution would posit that the narrator wants to concentrate on the Abram figure. The fact,

---

86.   But we should not forget that for source-oriented approaches this narrative is not supposed to have had any concrete tradition behind it. Cfr. Van Seters, *Abraham*, 221 – 222; which means that the narrator had a freer hand in the shaping of the story.

though, that the narrator deems it necessary to interrupt the story in order to insert his report about Lot's possessions demonstrate his interest in Lot as well. The only plausible answer lies in the narrator's wish to contrast Abram to Lot. And this helps to understand why the report about Abram's cultic activity in v. 4b has not been fitted within the symmetrical pattern of vv. 3b – 4a. Since *welôt ᶜimmô* encampment for both Abram's and Lot's household was common; Lot however takes no part in what must therefore be seen as Abram's characteristic action presented as essential to understand the on-coming story. Why is the narrator insisting that while Lot and Abram move together and live in the same area they are actually different and their main difference consisting in the "calling *Yhwh*'s name?"

The narrative's economy presses the narrator to concentrate mainly on the difficulty raised by the possessions of both patriarchs to settle together (v. 6).[87] The land was too small for them to stay in the same area. He intimates also that both Abram and Lot were themselves aware that they could not *lāšebet yahdaw* (v. 6b). But no one was willing to take the initiative in order to solve the problem.

(c) The narrative proper starts with a crisis. The situation of tension sensed already within the exposition becomes critical when the herdsmen of the two patriarchs quarrel. The narrator employs a rather ambiguous verb, *wayhî* which has both of the punctual *(RSV)* and of the iterative *(NEB)*.[88] Perhaps in the context the latter sense prevails. The narrator recounts that there was quarrelling *(rîb)* between Abram's and Lot's herds-men: *(rôᶜê miqneh)* (v. 7a). The motive for this *rîb* is not stated explicitly; but it probably involved grazing rights. Here the narrator intervenes to inform us that the Canaanite and the Perizzite *ᵓāz yōšēb bāᵓāres* (v. 7b). What is the motivation for this explicit comment? Perhaps he wants to intimate the danger the divided household is incurring. A more plausible explanation is that the narrator enhances the difficulty by informing us that Abram and Lot were not the only occupants of the land.

The initiative to resolve this situation of tension is taken by Abram: *wayyōᵓmer ᵓabrām ᵓel lôt* (v. 8a). Abram makes a Lot the proposal (Westermann) to separate (vv. 8 – 9). Abram takes the cue from what the narrator tells but stresses aspects which conform to his point of view. The narrator recounts that *wayhî rîb*: Abram begs *ᵓal nāᵓ tᵉhî mᵉrîbah*. The

87.   "The description of Abram's wealth in v. 2, however, is not as appropriate as that of Lot's possessions in v. 5 for what follows", Van Seters, *Abraham*, 224. This is what the exegete thinks not what the narrator thought of as important and appropriate for his narrative. The use of *miqneh* in vv. 2.7 argues for the relevance of Abraham's pastoral wealth for the dynamics of the narrative.

88.   Cfr. P. Paul Joüon, *Grammaire de l'Hébreu Biblique* (Pontifical Biblical Institute; Rome 1965) § III i.

narrator says that quarrelling took place *bên rōᶜê miqneh ꜣabrām ûbēn rōᶜê miqnēh lôṭ*. Abram asks that there be no strife *bênî ûbênekā ûbēn rōᶜay ûbên rāᶜèkā*. The stress in Abram's plea lies on the personal and familiar aspects as the motivation clause indicates: *kî ꜣănāšîm ꜣaḥîm ꜣănāḥnû*. Two comments are in order on this first part of Abram's speech.

(i) Why does the patriarch employ *mᵉrîbāh* instead of the narrator's *rîb*. Practically there exists no difference in meaning between the two terms. Perhaps the wish for variety dictated the use of this second word. But it may also be possible that while *rîb* is attached to the iterative sense of *wayhî*, *mᵉrîbāh* points to the punctual sense. Abram expresses the desire of total exclusion of strife within the family ambit above all, but also within the household at large. And his motivation: the existing strong family links.

(ii) The motivation clause must be understood in strictly personal and familial sense: it must be read in the context of Gen 11, 29. 31,; 12,5.(89)

The second half of Abram's speech (v. 9) is a complex comprising an interrogative, an imperative qualified by imprecative particle *nāꜣ*, and an indicative-conditional double clause. In short Abram proposes separate grazing areas within the ambit of *kol hāꜣāres: hippāred nāꜣmeᶜālî*. To appreciate Abram's geographical point of view one must take into consideration the Hebrew perspective on directions.(90) In other words Abram is proposing to Lot to choose his grazing ground to the south or to the north of his encampment in the Bethel region. One should notice that

(i) the imperative does not contain the concept of choice;

(ii) the formulation of the Lot's choice of direction does not imply definitiveness.

If after this interview Lot would choose to tend his *miqneh* in the north Abram would graze his in the south; but Lot in the future could turn to the south: Abram is promising that he will search pastures in the north. So that, Abram's proposal entails no permanent division of the land. To speak of generosity on Abram's part, therefore, is not out of order.(91)

The narrator picks up the narrative thread to tell us about Lot's reaction to Abram's proposal. One should note that the first verb to resume the narration flow is not PRD (although we are bound to meet it in the coming lines) but two perception verbs which have as object *ꜣet kol kikkar hayyarden* (v. 10): *wayyiśśāꜣ lôṭ ꜣet ᶜênāw wayyarᵉꜣ*. The narrator here assumes Lot's perspective(92) and describes it *kî kullah mašqeh*. But soon the

89. Cfr. Speiser, *Genesis*, 98; Westermann, *Genesis*, 206.
90. Cfr. Helyer, "Separation", 79 – 80.
91. Contra Vogels, "Lot in His Honour Restored", 5 – 12.
92. "The narrator exposes the inner psychological process of reflection and decision completely in its outward attitude of gazing, where indeed it does take place, " von Rad, *Genesis*, 172.

narrator "breaks the frame" and comes on scene to dialogue with the reader: the latter's knowledge of the area is probably that of a rugged, treeless and waterless place. But such desolate state did not always exist. Before *Yhwh* destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah the area resembled *kᵉgan Yhwh kᵉᵓeres misrayim*. This intervention is considered necessary in order to explain Lot's choice of permanent settlement. Perhaps the narrator means also to enframe Lot's choice within wider thought patterns.[93] The reader is bound to ask, if he is not cognizant of how the Abraham narrative is going to end, why will *Yhwh* destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. As well as he may get curious about the narrator's special interest in the Zoar's area if soon we shall read that Lot chooses Sodom rather than Zoar to pitch his tents by (v. 12).

When the narrative begins to move again we encounter what has been seen to be Lot's characteristic action within this episode: *wayyibhar lô lôṭ*. The verb BHR basically means "to choose"; when it governs the preposition *lᵉ* the verb acquires a slightly intensified meaning: to choose someone or something for (cfr 1 Sam 17, 40; 1 Kgs 18, 23.25; Job 34, 4).[94] The narrator reports the object of this choice *ᵓet kol kikkar hayyarden*. The verb BHR *lᵉ* together with intensive *kol* demonstrate how different the points of view of Abram and Lot concerning the land were. The former has proposed separate grazing grounds which could change on Lot's choice; the latter opts for a permanent settling area. He means to travel no more. The narrator then tells of Lot's travelling to his definitive settlement area with some emphasis. He repeats the subject *lôṭ* which grammatically is not necessary. Besides to indicate direction he uses a queer word, *miqqedem*, which always troubled translators. Parsed as indicating "direction from" the term makes no sense: but if we repoint the word as participle of deno- minational verb QDM, *mᵉqaddem,* meaning "going before, in front of"[95] the word fits the context perfectly. Abram proposes left or right directions (north or south); Lot chooses to go east, just infront of him: to there he journeys.

The narrator intervenes again to evaluate Lot's decision. Actually, he makes three or four comments:

(i) the first is very subtle and not even the inversion marker is employed: *wayyippārdû ᵓîš mēᶜal ᵓāḥîw*.

One should note the change of subject within this construct chain. The subject of the two previous clauses has been Lot: now the narrative switches to the plural to include Abram. There is then the use of *ᵓāḥîw* which here

93.   Cfr. Gros Louis, "Abraham I", 56 – 57.
94.   Cfr. *BDB*, 104a.
95.   For this meaning of the verb cfr. Ps 68, 26; *BDB*, 670a.

must mean relative, literally "brother". The narrator, therefore, underlines the psychological cost for both Abram and Lot. No one was happy with the situation. All accepted the separation as an inevitable evil.

(ii) But the narrator may be implying more in underlining the separation of the two relatives. Perhaps he means to intimate the definitive character of the separation. Abram and Lot separated for good. He makes this clear by identifying their respective settlement area (which in the case of Lot is not all necessary since we have been told already whither he has repaired (v. 11). In v. 12 we read

> *abram yāšab be *ereṣ kena can
>
> welôṭ yāšāb be*ārê hakkikkār

In this double statement we have an implication already noted by some scholars:[96] if Abram settled be*ereṣ kena can *ārê hakkikkār must be reputed as being situated outside Canaan. Lot has left Canaan, therefore. He *has chosen* not to live in Canaan; and this is an important detail to keep in mind in order to understand the narrator's intention.

(iii) The narrator adds a piece of information which again throws light on how he views Lot's choice: wayye*ehal *ad sedōm: ".... and pitched his tents near Sodom" (*NEB*). Why should the narrator mention that of all the cities of the *kikkar* Lot should pitch his tents near Sodom? Sodom has already been referred to in passing as having been the object of *Yhwh*'s destructive activity (v. 10). How is it that Lot chooses to encamp there? Is Lot seeking city life over against country life notwithstanding that his possessions (v. 5) equip him rather for pastoral living? (Abram instead possesses gold and silver (v. 2) and can well fit the life of the city). Is the narrator implying a contrast between Abram and Lot not only on the geographical level but also in the significance that their settlement areas assume in the context? A positive answer to these queries will appear possible when we read the narrator's next comment which in the literary context seems unnecessary: we*ānšê sedōm rā*îm wehattā*îm lāYhwh me*ōd (v. 13). Why should we be told that the moral life of Sodom's citizens ebbed to its lowest levels when Lot settled by Sodom's walls? Did Lot know of the moral state of the place he has chosen for his permanent residence?

(iv) It is very difficult to answer these questions. In his deliberations over which place to choose (v. 10). Lot took into consideration only that the Jordan Valley was well watered. Nothing more. Here we have a case where the narrator (and readers capable of reading between the lines) knows more than his characters.[97] The narrator means to be ironical at Lot's expense. Lot thinks to have made the best choice in the circumstances. But how could

96. Vawter, *Genesis*, 184 – 185; Helyer, "Separation", 79 – 80.
97. Cfr. Sternberg, *Poetics*, 159 – 172.

he know what was being prepared in the labyrinths of the future.[98] His was a mistaken decision. For the moment however he may live in the illusion that he couldn't have chosen better.

(d) The narrator abandons Lot to his fate and returns to Abram. He resorts to the inversion techniques to open a new scenic unit wherein he introduces a new personage: *wāYhwh ᵓāmar ᵓel ᵓabrām* (v. 14). In the exposition we are told of *Yhwh*'s existence: we read of Abram's calling upon *Yhwh*'s name as his special characteristic. But then we hear no more of the divinity. The narrative so far has been an essentially human affair. All of a sudden *Yhwh* enters the scene. "To enter the scene" is perhaps exaggerated since no circumstantial details are offered. We read simply of *Yhwh*'s speaking to Abram and of Abram's response in v. 18. Yet the narrator gives one important annotation: *Yhwh*'s intervention takes place *ᵓaharê hippāred lôt mēᶜimmô*. This should not be taken as a simple chrono-logical note introduced here to link the present scene to the previous one. No doubt this motive is also present. But it seems that the narrator is giving greater weight to Lot's departure. To begin with he takes on Abram's perspective as in v. 9: he emphasizes his loss. Somehow *Yhwh*'s speech has to do with Lot's separation from his uncle. Does *Yhwh* mean to console Abram? Or does *Yhwh* take the occasion of Lot's departure to launch a new a new idea which Lot's presence would have blocked? *Yhwh*'s may be said to have something of both possibilities although one should remember that no direct references to Lot are found in what *Yhwh* says.

Yhwh's speech contains significant echoings to the previous scenic unit as well as important novelties. This speech opens with a double imperative involving two verbs which have featured as action-words with Lot as subject (v. 10): *śā ᵓ nā ᵓ ᶜênèkā ûrᵉᵓēh*. Instead of the expected direct object we find instead a reference to the place of encampment: *min hāmmāqôm ᵓăšer ᵓattāh šām:* from this place, therefore, Abram could acquire a global view of the surroundings. Actually *Yhwh* invites a survey in all directions (v. 14c). The object of NS ᵓ and R ᵓ H soon appears: in the following *kî* clause we read that Abram is seeing/considering *ᵓet kol hā ᵓāres* (v. 15). "All the land" is the theme of *Yhwh*'s speech. The land as an independent theme in *Yhwh*'s intervention — excluding the two instances of verse 16 where it appears twice as element of the simile *kaᶜapar hā ᵓāres* — features twice. In each case it is the object verb NTN which has *Yhwh* for subject while Abram with his descendants or Abram alone constitutes the indirect object:

---

98. "Lot is not cast in a correspondingly selfish or mean-spirited role: it is only the part of good sense to seize the opportunity that offers most for oneself and one's family. Nevertheless, there is irony in the scene, for Genesis knows Lot to be a man for whom luck sours, whose choices inevitably end up badly", Vawter, *Genesis*, 183. Cfr. Speiser, *Genesis*, 98; Gros Louis, "Abraham I", 57.

kî ᵓet kol hāᵓāreṣ .... lᵉkā ᵓetnennāh ûlᵉzarᶜắkā (v. 15); *kî lᵉkā ᵓetnennāh.*
In this second case we have the pronominal suffix *nāh* which plays a re-
sumptive role with reference to *bāᵓāreṣ*. The particle *kî* carries the nuance
of emphasis especially in v. 15. "Indeed all the land you are seeing, to you I
shall give it and to your seed forever."

Yhwh is therefore stressing the element of gift attached to the theme of
the land. The use of the two verbs of perception NS ᵓ and R ᵓH (here
employed twice) suggests the narrator's wish to contrast Abram's deliberat-
ing over the land to Lot's. The latter has raised his eyes and saw in order to
choose. Abram is invited to do the same in order to see what *Yhwh* is
promising *(ᵓetnennah)* him. Besides, Abram in scenic unit one indicates the
entire land to Lot (v. 9), but his nephew fixed his mind immediately over the
Jordan valley *kî kulloh mašqeh* (v. 10). *Yhwh* again prospects *kol hāᵓāres*
as his future gift to Abram. Abram proposes to Lot no permanent possession
of any part of *hāᵓāreṣ* also because *wᵉhakkᵉnaᶜắnî wᵉhappᵉrizzî ᵓāz yošeb
bāᵓāreṣ* (v. 7b, but only the possibility of grazing his cattle wherever he
liked; *Yhwh* promises Abram permanent and stable possession of *kol
hāᵓāreṣ*: in verse 15 the verb *ᵓetnennāh* is qualified by adverbial clause *ᶜad
ᶜolam*. But there is also a new element: the mention of the descendants. In
verse 15 the promise of the land is made to Abram *ûlᵉzarᶜắkā ᶜad ᶜôlām.*
The stability and permanence of the land theme is attached to the factor of
descendants. But if Abram is childless and his wife *ᶜaqārāh* (11, 30) where
can the patriarch hope to get his children from? We can understand why in
verse 16 *Yhwh* stresses the promise of numerous progeny: *wᵉśamtî ᵓet
zarᶜắkā kaᶜapar hāᵓāres*. The theme of posterity here comes in help of that
of land.[99] *Yhwh* is promising to make of the land his permanent gift to
Abram; permanence in time cannot but include the continuation of Abram
through his seed.[100]

(e) There are two questions the answers to which are only possible if
one reads Gen 13 as part of a larger whole. The first concerns the emphasis
the narrator puts on *Yhwh*'s promise of the land being addressed above all
to Abram himself: *lᵉkā ᵓetnennāh* (vv. 15. 17). The second entails Abram's
response to *Yhwh*'s speech: why should Abram move his tents, travel to
Mamre and settle *(wayyešeb)* among its Oaks when *Yhwh* instructed him to
arise and travel the land through and through (v. 17)? Only partially may we

99. Helyer, "Separation", 85 – 86 identifies the main theme as that of heir since this is the
concern of the entire Abraham's cycle. But he does not exclude the presence of "other
secondary purposes" like the narrator's wish to portray the slow process of settlement. An
analysis of the text has shown, however, that the narrator's main concern is to depict Abram's
relationship to the land with the posterity aspect fitting in as an important factor. It may be of
relevance that *Yhwh*'s promise to give Abram numberless descendants is expressed only after
Lot's departure.
100. Cfr. Abela, *Reading,* 161 – 163 for a discussion of the structure beneath *Yhwh*'s speech.

answer these questions if we isolate Gen 13 from its wider context. To the first question one may answer, of course, that *Yhwh* emphasizes Abram's role as addressee of his promises in contradistinction to Lot. *Yhwh* excludes Lot purposely. But the stress on Abram seems too heavy to be explained adequately in that manner. To the second question one may say that Abram's behaviour may not constitute an act of disobedience if *Yhwh*'s command in v. 17 is simply an invitation to possess the land symbolically (Daube).

When one reads Gen 13 within its wider literary context he will notice that Gen 13, 18 is the first report about Abram which states that he settled (*wayyēšeb*) somewhere (we should exclude 11, 31 which has Terah and the entire clan for subject, and 13, 12 which we have seen, is the narrator's comment). Most action-words which have Abram for their subject are verbs of motion: *wayyēlek* (12, 4); *wayyēṣᵉᵓû lāleket* (Abram and Clan) (12,5); *wayyēbōᵓû* (12, 5); *wayyaᶜabōr* (12, 6); *wayyaᶜtēq* (12, 8); *wayyissaᶜ...* *hālōk wᵉnasôaᶜ* (12, 9); *wayyēred miṣraymah lāgûr šām* (12, 10); *wayyaᶜal* (13, 1); *wayyēlek lᵉmassāᶜāw* (13, 3). Only in 13, 18 we read *wayyeᵓᵉhal ᵓabrām wayyābōᵓ wayyēšeb bᵉᵓēlōnê mamrēᵓ*. This is the first time that Abraham settles down. One may be entitled to ask for the reason that only after this last intervention of *Yhwh* Abram feels he should settle to a fixed area. The answer lies perhaps in *Yhwh*'s emphasis that his promise of the land is directed to patriarch personally: *lᵉkā ᵓetnennāh*. In his original command to leave his environment *Yhwh* promised to show Abram the land to where he has destined him to travel (12, 1). Once in the region of Shechem the patriarch received the assurance that "this land" was to be given to his descendants (12, 7). Abram still felt disenchanted with this land because he himself after all was not involved in the promise dynamics; he kept travelling south without fixed abode (12, 9). When the land created serious difficulties (12, 10) Abram solved the problem by choosing temporary residence (*lāgûr*) in Egypt. But Egypt was not the land of the promise, and were it not for *Yhwh* his stay there could have been disastrous (12,10 – 20). When Abram returned to Canaan and Lot decided to live in an area "outside Canaan" *Yhwh* renewed this promise of the land; this time however the promise is not vague and futuristic as in 12, 7 but concrete, involving the patriarch himself. The patriarch could finally settle on his own land notwithstanding the current occupation by other peoples. By now Abram learned that the land he was settling in has been *Yhwh*'s gift to him and his posterity.[101]

101.   Cfr. ibid., 209. 275 – 276. One should perhaps add that if Gen 13 takes for granted what has been already narrated of Abram in the previous episodes, some narrative elements point rather to the future. For instance the reference to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and to the wickedness of Sodom's inhabitants prepare us for episodes which have still to be told. But this proves that Gen 13 may not be read in isolation.