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Delimitation Markers, Chapter Division, Syntax and Literary Structure: the Case of Genesis 37:1–2

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# Textual Boundaries in the Bible

Their Impact on Interpretation

*Edited by*

Marjo C.A. Korpel  
Paul Sanders



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Delimitation Markers, Chapter Division,  
Syntax and Literary Structure:  
The Case of Genesis 37:1-2\*

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*Abstract*

Many modern Bible translations insert a heading between the end of Genesis 36 and the beginning of Genesis 37 such as ‘Joseph and his brothers’ or ‘Joseph’s dreams’. This suggests (1) that a new section starts at 37:1 and (2) that this section contains the Joseph story.

That 37:1 marks a new start is suggested by the usual chapter numbering, by the *petuḥah* before 37:1 in the Masoretic Text, and by the division of the text for the weekly Torah readings, both in the Babylonian annual cycle and in the Palestinian triennial cycle. There are, however, linguistic and literary arguments for considering a major break between 37:1 and 37:2 rather than between 36:43 and 37:1. Interestingly, precisely at this point we find a discrepancy between Stephen Langton’s chapter division (starting with 37:2) and the Vulgate manuscripts (starting with 37:1).

It is tacitly assumed in many Bible translations and commentaries that chapter 37, or the whole section of Genesis 37–50, deals with Joseph. This assumption can be challenged, however, because the *Toledot* formula in 37:2 speaks of the *Toledot* of Jacob, rather than of Joseph.

It is difficult therefore to know how we should deal with the sometimes contradictory evidence of the Masoretic text division (*petuḥah* and *setumah*), the liturgical division of the weekly Torah readings, Langton’s chapter numbers, the traditional numbering in Vulgate manuscripts, structural formulas in the text (such as the *Toledot* formula), and syntactic indications of unit delimitations. In this contribution we will address the main problems one has to face when dealing with these questions and discuss various choices made in modern Bible translations.

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\* The investigations for this study were supported by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO).

## 1 Introduction

Many modern Bible translations<sup>1</sup> insert a heading between the end of Genesis 36 and the beginning of Genesis 37 such as ‘Joseph and his brothers’ or ‘Joseph’s dreams’. This suggests (1) that a new section starts at 37:1 and (2) that this section contains the Joseph story.

At first sight both assumptions are obvious: after chapter 36, which mainly consists of name lists of the descendants and rulers of Esau/ Edom, 37:1 resumes the storyline of chapter 35 about Jacob and his descendants, and hence it marks the start of a new section. The chapter contains the famous story about Joseph, his robe, his dreams, the jealousy of his brothers who threw him into a pit, and the way he was sold to merchants who brought him to Egypt. This provides the overture to Joseph’s adventures in Egypt in Genesis 39–50. Hence it seems appropriate to regard Genesis 37 as the first part of the Joseph story.

However, both assumptions can be challenged. Various alternative text divisions and interpretations compel us to address the fundamental methodological question as to how we should deal with the sometimes contradictory evidence of the Masoretic text division (*petuḥah* and *setumah*), the liturgical division of the weekly Torah readings, Langton’s chapter numbers, the traditional numbering in Vulgate manuscripts, structural formulas in the text, and syntactic indications of unit delimitations.

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<sup>1</sup> Translations checked in the preparation of this study (those mentioned between square brackets do not have headings added in the translation):

- Dutch: Groot Nieuws Bijbel, Herziene Statenvertaling, [Het Boek], [Naardense Bijbel], Nieuwe Bijbelvertaling, Nieuwe Vertaling, [Statenvertaling], Willibrord Vertaling.
- Frisian: Nije Fryske Bibeloersetting.
- German: [Bibel in Gerechter Sprache], Luther, Zürcher Bibel.
- English: Good News Bible, [King James Version] and New King James Version, New English Bible (NEB), New International Version, Revised English Bible (REB), [Revised Standard Version (RSV)] and [New Revised Standard Version], and Meek 1923.
- French: Bible de Jérusalem (BJ), Traduction Œcuménique de la Bible, Segond, Segond<sup>21</sup>, Semeur.
- Spanish: Dios Habla Hoy (DHH), Nueva Biblia Española (NBE).
- Portugese: Biblia Sagrada (BibSag).
- Catalan: Biblia Catalana Interconfessional (BCI).

## 2 Genesis 37:1/2 as the start of a new section

There are both ancient and modern sources that take Genesis 37:1 as the start of a new textual unit. Thus 37:1 is marked as a new start in the system of *petuhot* and *setumot*,<sup>2</sup> as well as in the liturgical division of the text into weekly Torah readings, both in the Babylonian annual cycle, in which 37:1–40:23 is one of the 54 (or 53) *parašot*, and in the Palestinian triennial cycle, in which chapter 37 is one of the 154 (or 167) *sedarim*.<sup>3</sup>

It is also the beginning of a new chapter in the usual chapter numbering which entered Bible editions from the Clementine Vulgate, even though, as we shall see below, Stephen Langton, with whom this chapter division is usually associated, had a new chapter start with 37:2. Apparently, the chapter division at 37:1/2 is one of those places in which changes and corrections were made to Langton's chapter division.<sup>4</sup>

### 2.1 Modern translations and commentaries

In modern Bible translations it is very common to consider 37:1 as a new start, not only by applying the traditional chapter division, but also by adding a superscription to 37:1ff. Of all the translations I checked (see footnote 1), there were only very few that added a superscription between 37:1 and 37:2 (see the discussion below). Also commentaries – whether or not they show an awareness of the problems involved in the text division of these verses – follow the traditional division: the fourth volume of Ruppert's commentary on Genesis (Ruppert 2008) and the third volume in the commentaries by Westermann (1982) and Seebass (2000) all cover Genesis 37:1–50:26.

<sup>2</sup> Both the Codex Leningradensis and the Codex of Aleppo have a *petuḥah* before 37:1.

<sup>3</sup> 4QGen<sup>e</sup>, which contains Genesis 36:43–37:2, is too fragmentary to draw any conclusions about its text division; cf. Ulrich 2013, I, 13.

Interestingly, the Samaritan tradition is divided, some manuscripts making a break after עַבְרָה, others after יִצְחָק (Von Gall 1918, 76). The Greek Codex Alexandrinus does not start a new paragraph at 37:1, but at 36:43b οὐτοί (homioarkton?) and marks both verses 37:2 and 37:3 as paragraphs by *ekthesis*.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Schmid 1892, 92, on differences between Langton's division and the Clementine Vulgate and *ibid.*, 98, on the possible background of the changes and corrections made. See further below, section 2.2.1, on Langton's division.



This short survey illustrates that the traditional chapter division has an enormous influence on the reading – also the scholarly reading – of the Bible, even though it is generally acknowledged that this division ‘was prepared a very long time after the writing of the text (...), reflects late exegesis, and is not always precise’.<sup>5</sup>

## 2.2 *Genesis 37:2 as a new start*

### 2.2.1 Stephen Langton’s text division

The usual chapter division that is nowadays found in most modern Bibles goes back to the thirteenth-century bishop Stephen Langton. His text division first entered the manuscript tradition of the Vulgate and from there it spread to other versions of the Bible. However, before his system acquired a firm position in the Vulgate manuscripts, various corrections and changes were made. The most important source for our knowledge of Langton’s own chapter division is MS Paris, Bibl. nat. Lat. 14.417, fol. 125r–126v.<sup>6</sup> In this manuscript, a new chapter starts with *Joseph cum sedecim esset annorum*.<sup>7</sup> This is also the start of a new chapter in Hugo of St Cher’s *Postilla*, who apparently followed the list in the Paris manuscript.<sup>8</sup> This means that Langton, unlike the later receptors of his chapter division, considered 37:2, rather than 37:1, as the start of a new chapter.

### 2.2.2 Modern translations

There are only a very few modern Bible translations that have a new section start at 37:2. Two translations take 37:1 with the preceding and add a contrastive nuance in their translation of this verse: ‘But Jacob...’: T.J. Meek’s translation (Meek 1923) and *La Bible de Jérusalem*. The Spanish translation *Dios Hable Hoy* marks the whole of chapters 37–50 as the section on Joseph, but has, after 37:1-2a, a new section heading for 37:2b-11 (‘José y sus hermanos’).

### 2.2.3 The *Toledot* formula

The main reason to consider 37:2 as a new start is the *Toledot* formula in 37:2 אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת יַעֲקֹב ‘These are the *Toledot* of Jacob’ (RSV:

<sup>5</sup> Tov 1992, 52.

<sup>6</sup> On the significance of this manuscript see also Van Banning 2007, 151-156.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Schmid 1892, 58, 60.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Van Banning 2007, 157-159.

‘This is the history of the family of Jacob.’<sup>9</sup> The *Toledot* formulas are recognized as a major structuring element in Genesis,<sup>10</sup> although opinions differ about their role in the composition history of Genesis and about the question as to whether the P source to which it is attributed, should be viewed as a separate source or as a redactional layer. Some *Toledot* formulas have raised discussion, such as the *Toledot* of heaven and earth in 2:4 (is this also a superscription or a subscription?) and that of Terah in 11:27 (how should one account for the absence of *Toledot* of Abram?).

Most often the structuring role of the *Toledot* formulas is corroborated by the system of the *petuḥot* and *setumot*. Usually there is a *petuḥah* or a *setumah* immediately before the *Toledot* formula: a *petuḥah* in 2:4 (thus taking it as a superscription rather than a subscription), 5:1 (here we find a somewhat different formula: וְהָיָה כִּסְפֵר תְּלִדוֹת אָדָם); 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 25:19; 36:1. A *setumah* occurs only before the small section of the *Toledot* of Ishmael (25:12-18). There are two other cases where there is no *petuḥah* or *setumah* immediately before the *Toledot* formula: in 36:9 and in 11:27. In 36:9 this may be due to the fact that the formula ‘these are the *Toledot* of Esau’ in 36:9 is a repetition of 36:1, and hence not taken as the start of a new section. In 11:27 the situation is comparable to Genesis 37:1/2, in that one verse before the *Toledot* formula, between 11:25 and 11:26, there is a *setumah*.<sup>11</sup>

### 2.3 Syntactic considerations

The view that 37:2 marks a new start is further supported by syntactical considerations regarding 37:1-2.

וַיֵּשֶׁב יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מִגּוּרֵי אָבִיו בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן: Gen. 37:1  
 אֵלֶּה תְּלִדוֹת יַעֲקֹב יוֹסֵף בֶּן־שִׁבְעֵ־עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה הָיָה רֹעֵה אֶת־אֶחָיו בְּצֹאן Gen. 37:2a

37:1 And Jacob dwelt in the land of his father’s sojournings, in the land of Canaan.

37:2a This is the history of the family of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was shepherding the flock with his brothers.

<sup>9</sup> Why Jacob’s name is given here, rather than Joseph’s, will be discussed below (section 3).

<sup>10</sup> See e.g. Pirson 1999, 108-136 (Ch. 3, ‘The *Toledot* of Jacob within the Book of Genesis’); Carr 1998, 170; Dicou 1994, 126-129.

<sup>11</sup> Note that the BHS adds a blank line before the *Toledot* formula.

The *wayyiqtol* form וַיִּשָּׁב in 37:1 suggests continuity with what precedes. Then comes the *Toledot* formula itself, which is a nominal clause and hence ‘indicates a break in the narrative flow’ (Pirson 1999, 74). Also the fact that it is an asyndetic clause (אֵלֶּה is not preceded by the conjunction *waw*) brings about a caesura between this formula and the preceding verse.<sup>12</sup>

The syntactic structure immediately following the *Toledot* formula, the Subject – *qatal* pattern, is also a clear indication of a new start. That this pattern commences a new paragraph is corroborated by W. Gross’s study on syntactic phenomena at the beginning of ancient Hebrew narratives, in which he recognizes the role of the X – *qatal* pattern as a signal of an ‘absolute’ start of a new story,<sup>13</sup> and by studies by M. Eskhult and L.J. de Regt, who deal more specifically with the Subject – *qatal* pattern,<sup>14</sup> although the latter do not clearly make the important distinction between asyndetic and syndetic Subject – *qatal* clauses.<sup>15</sup>

With most *Toledot* formulas in Genesis we find a similar combination of a *Toledot* formula with syntactic phenomena that mark the beginning of a new story. Most often the *Toledot* formula is followed by an asyndetic clause, i.e. not introduced by *waw*, which underlines their role as markers of a new beginning (Gross 1981, 144).<sup>16</sup> The *Toledot* formula is followed by a Subject – *qatal* clause

<sup>12</sup> Pirson 1999, 74; contrast the syndetic construction in 36:1, 9 where ‘Esau’s genealogy is tied to the preceding events’ (Pirson, *ibid.*, note 1).

<sup>13</sup> Gross 1981, 134. Gross discusses examples with הָיָה (e.g. Job 1:1 אִישׁ הָיָה בְּאֶרֶץ-עוּז ‘There was a man in the land of Uz’) but refers in his note 9 to examples with other verbs, such as Josh. 2:2 הִנֵּה אֲנָשִׁים בָּאוּ הַנֶּה ‘Behold, they have come (to search out all the land)’ and 2 Kgs 1:6 לִקְרֹאתָנוּ אִישׁ עָלֵה לִקְרֹאתָנוּ ‘There came a man to meet us’. See also Talstra 1983, 29-30.

<sup>14</sup> Eskhult 1994, 37-41 (p. 37: ‘in *narration* the order *subj-qtI* marks a cut in the sequential narrative chain; a cut that is brought about by the insertion of a statement of non-narrative sequential character. This statement, made about the fronted subject, is interpreted as a description, or a circumstance, which may bear either on the nearby clause, or on the whole episode.’) cf. also Eskhult, *ibid.*, 45-57, on the ‘(w-)*subj-qatal* Clause as Episode Marginal Circumstantial’; and further De Regt 1999, 16-17.

<sup>15</sup> Thus Eskhult’s list of examples in *narration* (as against *dialogue*) on p. 38 contains only examples with *w-*, except for 37:2 (the verse under discussion), Gen. 44:3 אִרְבַּע אֲוֵר ‘As soon as the morning was light’ and 44:4 הֵם יָצְאוּ לִפְנֵי הָרֶחֱקִים ‘When they had gone but a short distance from the city’. All examples given by De Regt (in addition to the examples he quotes from Eskhult) are instances of *w-Subject – qatal* as well.

in 11:27 (*Toledot* of Terah); 25:19 (*Toledot* of Isaac); and 36:1-2 (*Toledot* of Esau). Most often the subject of the Subject – *gatal* clause is identical with the participant referred to in the *Toledot* formula (Terah in 11:27; Esau in 36:1-2), but it is different (as here, in 37:1-2) in 25:19, where it is Abraham in Isaac's *Toledot*.

#### 2.4 *Literary ties between 37:1 and chapter 36*

In addition to the syntactic observation that 37:1 begins with a *wayyiqtol*, which suggests a connection with what precedes, there are also literary ties between 37:1 and the preceding *Toledot* of Esau in chapter 36, especially the correlation between 36:8 וַיֵּשֶׁב עֵשָׂו בְּהַר שֵׁעִיר 'So Esau dwelt in the hill country of Seir' and 37:1 וַיֵּשֶׁב יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן: (but) Jacob dwelt in the land of his father's sojournings, in the land of Canaan'. For this reason G. von Rad comments:<sup>17</sup>

Die priesterschriftliche Notiz von dem Aufenthalt Jakobs im Lande Kanaan (Kap. 37,1) versteht man am besten als Abschluß der *Toledot* Esaus. Sie entspricht dem Satz Kap. 36,8 und leitet wieder zurück zu der Genealogie der Erwählten, die im Gegensatz zu dem in der südliche Steppe wohnenden Nachkommen Esaus Anwärter auf das Verheißungsland waren.

Scholars who recognize the tight connection of 37:1 with what precedes hold different views about the role of the intervening genealogies of Esau in 36:9-43. According to some, they fit well into Esau's *Toledot*, providing background information,<sup>18</sup> but others consider them a later insertion, which interrupts the flow of the narrative and tears apart the remarks about Esau's and Jacob's dwelling-places.<sup>19</sup>

#### 2.5 *Interim conclusion*

From our discussion so far, we can conclude that the break between 36:43 and 37:1 which is found in so many ancient and modern witnesses, is not self-evident. Elsewhere in this volume Wim de Bruin distinguishes three categories of textual breaks: (1) 'generally placed

<sup>16</sup> Gross speaks of asyndetic 'Vordergrundsätzen', referring to, e.g. Gen. 6:6; 37:2.

<sup>17</sup> Von Rad 1972, 283. For the view that 37:1 belongs to Esau's *Toledot*, see also Blum 1954, 437; Dicou 1994, 116; Gunkel 1922, 395; Longacre 1989, 20-21; Pirson 1999, 74; Skinner 1930, 429, 443; Tengström 1981, 31.

<sup>18</sup> Thus e.g. Pirson 1999, 74.

<sup>19</sup> Thus e.g. Skinner 1930, 429, 443; Tengström 1981, 31; Procksch 1924, 554.

and corresponding with the internal structure of the text'; (2) 'representing specific exegetical choices, not necessarily corresponding with the internal structure of the text and not generally placed'; and (3) 'representing specific exegetical choices and not necessarily corresponding with the internal structure of the text, but still almost generally placed'.<sup>20</sup> We can conclude that the break before 37:1 belongs to De Bruin's third category, rather than to the first, because it does not necessarily correspond with the internal text structure. The tendency to add a delimitation marker after a list or genealogy, which Eveline van Staaldune discerned in Samuel,<sup>21</sup> may also have played a role in the practice of adding one between 36:43 and 37:1.

### 3 Joseph in Jacob's Toledot

#### 3.1 *Modern translations and commentaries*

It is very common in Bible translations, commentaries and other studies, to speak of Genesis 37ff as the Joseph Story. Even those Bible translations that recognize the macro-structure of Genesis in which Genesis 37ff marks a distinct unit do not accept the challenge to follow the main structural framework of Genesis and call this section the story (*Toledot*) of Jacob. The headings we find for Genesis 37–50 are 'Joseph' (TOC); '4. José' (DHH); 'Histoire de Joseph' (BJ; Segond<sup>21</sup>); 'Ciclo de Jose' (NBE); 'Joseph in Egypt' (NEB); 'IV José e seus irmãos' (BibSag); 'Josep i els seus germans' (BCI). The REB divides Genesis 37–50 into two units: 'Joseph' (37–45) and 'The Israelites in Egypt' (46–50). This designation of Genesis 37–50 is also found in many commentaries. The fourth part of Seebass' commentary on Genesis, for example, dealing with 37:1–50:26, is called *Josephgeschichte*.<sup>22</sup> In introductions to the Old Testament, we often find references to the 'Joseph *Novelle*', consisting of Genesis 37–50 or the lion's part of it (chapters 37, 39–48, 50).<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> See De Bruin in this volume, 60-61.

<sup>21</sup> See Van Staaldune-Sulman, in this volume, 38-39.

<sup>22</sup> Seebass 2000.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Eissfeldt 1934, 38 (referring to chapters 37, 39–48, 50); Fohrer 1969–1971, I, 39; Smend 1978, 87; Vriezen and Van der Woude 2000, 176.

### 3.2 The 'enigmatic' inclusion of the Joseph stories in Jacob's *Toledot*

E.A. Speiser felt so uneasy with the alleged discrepancy between the *Toledot* formula and the stories that follow that he argued that 37:2a 'must go with what precedes' and presumably (depending on the exact translation of *Toledot*) 'marks the dividing line between the story of Jacob, whose generation must now yield to the next, and that of Joseph, which is just beginning' (Speiser 1964, 280). In our view, however, this is based on an anachronistic understanding of family relationships and 'generations', and violates the function and meaning of the *Toledot* formulas in Genesis.

In the light of the functions and contexts of other *Toledot* formulas in Genesis, the inclusion of the stories about Joseph in Jacob's *Toledot* is not as enigmatic as it seems to modern readers.<sup>24</sup> The first observation that can be made is that in those cases in which the *Toledot* formula introduces a genealogy, a person's *Toledot* deals with his descendants, rather than with himself.<sup>25</sup> This happens in 5:1 (Adam), 10:1 (Noah's sons), 11:10 (Shem), 25:12 (Ishmael), 36:1, 9 (Esau).<sup>26</sup> In those cases in which the *Toledot* formula is a superscription to a narrative section, however, we see something similar: the stories may deal with a person's descendants, rather than only with his own encounters.<sup>27</sup> Thus the *Toledot* of Terah contains mainly stories about Abraham, and Isaac's *Toledot* contains the Jacob story.<sup>28</sup>

Apparently, someone's *Toledot* deals with his whole family and continues till his death. For this reason a translation of *Toledot* as 'family story' (as in the RSV in 37:2 'this is the story of the family

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Van Peursen 2013.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Carr 1998, 163; the interpretation of *Toledot* as 'descendants' is problematic in Gen. 6:9 (Carr *ibid.*, 167).

<sup>26</sup> Perhaps also 2:4 ('heaven and earth'); cf. Carr 1998, 164–165.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Pirson 1999, 114: 'Regarding the main characters we may conclude that in a person's *Toledot* (between 11:10 and 50:25; Noah's *Toledot* are the exception to the rule) it is either his son or his sons that are the main characters. In Terah's the main character is Abra(ha)m, in Isaac's these are Esau and Jacob, and in Jacob's his twelve sons play the leading parts, despite Jacob's prominent presence in the section of his *Toledot*.'

<sup>28</sup> A difference between these two examples and Genesis 37 is that the *Toledot* of Terah and of Isaac begin with the birth of their sons, whereas the birth of Jacob's sons has previously been recounted and his sons have been enumerated in 35:22b-26; cf. Tengström 1981, 18.

of Jacob<sup>29</sup>) definitely deserves recommendation.<sup>30</sup> That a person's *Toledot* continues till his death, irrespective of the experiences of his descendants during his lifetime, explains why we find several times the sequence

Account of someone's death – Start of a new *Toledot*.

Thus Noah's death in 9:28-29 is immediately followed by the *Toledot* of his sons in 10:1; Abram's death in 25:8-11 by Ishmael's *Toledot*; and Isaac's death in 35:29 by Esau's *Toledot*.<sup>31</sup> In a similar way, the superscription in 37:2 covers all the stories about Jacob and his sons till Jacob's death and burial in 49:33-50:14. And just as Noah's *Toledot* have at their end Noah's blessing and curse over his sons in 9:25-27, so Jacob's *Toledot* have his blessings over his sons near the end, in chapter 49 (Tengström 1981, 40).

### 3.3 *Anthropological considerations*

We can conclude that Jacob's name in the superscription in Genesis 37:2 agrees with the structural literary framework of the *Toledot* formulas in the book of Genesis. In addition to these literary considerations, the references to Jacob's *Toledot* in 37:2 can be accounted for by anthropological considerations: it reflects a society in which family relations and the role of the patriarch differs from modern Western notions of family and genealogical relations. As long as someone was alive, his family was listed under his name. As Von Rad puts it (1972, 286):

Solange der Geschlechtsälteste lebt – und Jakob stirbt ja erst am Ende der 'Josephgeschichte' (Kap. 49,33) –, stand die Familie mit allem, was in ihr geschah, vollends die unverheirateten Söhne, unter seinem Namen.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup> When checking Bible translations on 37:2 I was surprised by noticing that *Het Boek* leaves the *Toledot* formula in 37:2 untranslated.

<sup>30</sup> On *Toledot* as 'family story', see Von Rad 1934, 34; Carr 1998, 168.

<sup>31</sup> Tengström 1981, 33-34 (Noah, Isaac), 37-38 (Jacob), 38-39 (Ishmael). Cf. Blum 1954, 433: 'Zweitens (...) ist zu beachten, daß der Einleitung durch die Toledotformel jeweils die Angaben über den Tod des betreffenden Stammvaters als Abschluß korrespondieren, so daß die Abgrenzung der thematischen Einheiten durch die Todesnotiz des einen Ahnherrn und die Toledot des anderen zugleich markiert wird.'

<sup>32</sup> Von Rad 1972, 286. Quoting Von Rad, Blum 1954, 433, note 2, adds that the sons by marriage also belong to the  $\text{בְּיָתוֹ}$ .

### 3.4 *The role of Jacob and Joseph's brothers*

In addition to the literary and anthropological observations that account for Jacob's name in the *Toledot* formula in 37:2, we can add that Jacob does not completely disappear from the scene, but figures in various parts of the story that evolves in Genesis 37–50, as well as in the considerations and motivations of the other participants. At various points the continuation of the plot depends on Jacob's actions. He gives Joseph a coat of many colours (37:3), sends Joseph to his brothers (37:13), mourns for his son (37:34), sends his sons to Egypt (42:2), is subject of the brother's speech to Joseph (42:13), and the addressee of speeches by his sons (42:29-34), by Reuben (42:37) and by Judah (43:3-5, 8-10); he is unwilling to let Benjamin go with his brothers, which delays the development of the plot (cf. 43:10); he is the subject of Joseph's first question to his brothers after the revelation of Joseph's identity (45:3), is visited by God (46:2-4), comes to Egypt (ch. 46), visits the Pharaoh (47:7-10), blesses the sons of Joseph and sets the younger before the older (ch. 48), and blesses his own sons (ch. 49). His influence persists after his death, when Joseph fulfils the promise Jacob had him make about his burial in Canaan rather than in Egypt (47:29; 50:4-14). His role as the leading figure in the family as long as he lived is also implied by the brothers' fear that Joseph would wait for Jacob's death before taking revenge on his brothers (50:15).

As far as Jacob's sons are concerned, not only Joseph, but also the other sons are on the scene in various parts of this Genesis 37–50. In particular the prominent role of Judah, whose speeches have a central position in chapters 37 and 44 and who is the central participant in chapter 38, should be mentioned here.<sup>33</sup> The role of Jacob's other descendants in his *Toledot* is ignored when Genesis 37–50 is called the Joseph Story. A similar picture emerges when we analyse Terah's *Toledot*. Genesis 12ff is often taken as the Abraham Narrative, but it is not only Abraham that figures in these stories, but also various other descendants of Terah: Lot (Haran's son) and Betuel (Nahor's son and Rebecca's father).<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Fokkelman 1996; 2000, 81-82.

<sup>34</sup> Tengström 1981, 38. Note that Tatu in his contribution to *Pericope 7* (2007) delimitates the Abraham Narrative to 12:1–25:11. This agrees with the common usage, but can be challenged on the basis of the structural framework of the *Toledot* formulas. The system of *petuhot* and *setumot* does not favour a



#### 4 Conclusions

We started by observing that many modern Bible translations insert a heading between the end of Genesis 36 and the beginning of Genesis 37 such as ‘Joseph and his brothers’ or ‘Joseph’s dreams’ and noticed that this has two implications: that a new section starts at 37:1 and that this section contains the Joseph story.

That 37:1 marks a new start is suggested by many ancient and modern sources, including the Masoretic text division and the chapter numbering in manuscripts of the Clementine Vulgate. There are, however, linguistic and literary arguments to consider a major break between 37:1 and 37:2 rather than between 36:43 and 37:1. To these arguments belongs in the first place the *Toledot* formula in 37:2, which is part of a major structural framework in Genesis. The other arguments are the tight connection of 37:1 with what precedes it, both from a literary view (contrasting Esau’s and Jacob’s dwelling-places) and syntactically (the *wayyiqtol* form in 37:1); and the syntactic form of the *Toledot* formula (asyndese) and of the clause immediately following it (Subject – *qatal*). Interestingly, precisely at this point we find one of the few discrepancies between Stephen Langton’s chapter division (starting with 37:2) and the Vulgate manuscripts (starting with 37:1).

The renewed appreciation of text delimitations in the text and transmission of the Old Testament, as represented by the Pericope project has evoked a tendency in Old Testament scholarship to take the text as it presents itself, including the delimitation markers and other paratextual elements.<sup>35</sup> Although I welcome this renewed interest in an essential aspect of the text of the Old Testament, it should not dictate the order of the various steps in our reading of the texts. The example under discussion shows that the traditional text division (whether in traditional Jewish divisions of the Hebrew text or in Western traditions reflected in Vulgate manuscripts) may be dissimilar to a text division that is based on text-syntactic and

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start at 12:1 over a start at 11:26, because both are preceded by a *setumah* (cf. above, on the *setumah* before 11:26).

<sup>35</sup> Elsewhere we have argued that the interest in texts as artefacts and the material aspects of the carriers, including the mise-en-page, the use of delimitation markers and paleography is part of a much broader development, which H. Gumbrecht has described as a ‘re-awakened interest in presence’; cf. Van Peursen 2010, 6, with reference to Gumbrecht 2004.

exegetical analysis. In such cases we should not restrict the text-syntactic and text-hierarchical analysis to the traditional textual units, but study traditional text divisions and text-hierarchical and exegetical or redactional structures in parallel, and confront them only after both have been analysed independently.<sup>36</sup>

That chapter 37, or the whole section of Genesis 37–50, deals with Joseph is tacitly assumed in many Bible translations, commentaries and other studies. Such an approach, however, ignores an important structural feature of the text (the framework of the *Toledot* formulas) and reflects a disregard of ancient Hebrew literary conventions (regarding the question of who the main participant of a story is) and an anachronistic understanding of the social and anthropological constructions they imply (regarding the definition of ‘family’ and the role of a patriarch). I am looking forward to a modern translation that picks up this challenge and gives Genesis 37:2–50:26 the heading ‘Jacob’s family story’.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Cf. Van Peursen 2007, 169, 412.

<sup>37</sup> There is a good chance that the Moronene translation that is currently being prepared in Indonesia will be the first translation (as far as I am aware of) that accepts this challenge and will add the title *Tulurano leeno i Yakub* (‘the story of the descendants of Jacob’) to 37:2–50:26. The main obstacle for this translational choice is not so much the validity of the claims made in the present article, but rather the power of convention, especially in the bilingual context of the target group of the Moronene translation: The users of this translation will have side by side with the Moronene translation an Indonesian translation that has not incorporated these insights. (David Andersen, Wycliffe Bible Translators, personal communication at the SBL International Meeting in Amsterdam, July 2012).

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