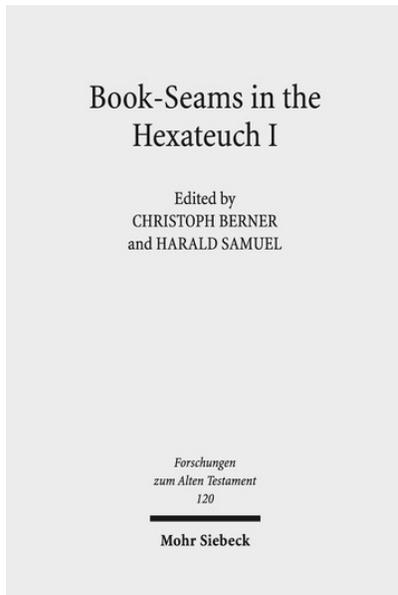


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Christoph Berner and Harald Samuel, eds.

***Book-Seams in the Hexateuch I: The Literary
Transitions between the Books of Genesis/Exodus and
Joshua/Judges***

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This volume is based on papers delivered at conferences held in 2014 and 2015 in Göttingen, supplemented by a number of extra contributions, in order to achieve the ambitious goal of presenting a comprehensive treatment of a broad scholarly discussion of the complicated issues concerning the way the books of Genesis and Exodus and of Joshua and Judges have been connected to each other. In the history of exegesis, these topics have been discussed many times without resulting in a lasting consensus. The editors justify the new attempt to tackle the old problems by the fact that special attention is given to the material aspects, especially to the ancient scribal practices with regard to the separate scrolls.

The contributions are subdivided into three parts: (1) “The Literary Transition between the Books of Genesis and Exodus”; (2) “The Literary Transition between the Books of Joshua and Judges”; and (3) “The Transitions between the Books of Genesis/Exodus and Joshua/Judges and Their Literary Relationship.” All parts start with an elaborate presentation of the material evidence, followed by one contribution with a survey of the history of research and two to four contributions discussing contemporary literary historical approaches. In parts 1 and 2 also a variety of other subjects in the books of Genesis, Exodus, Joshua, and Judged are studied, subsumed under the heading “The Larger Context.” The book is concluded by indexes of texts and authors.

Part 1 opens with Christoph Berner's "The Attestation of the Book-Seam in the Early Textual Witnesses and Its Literary-Historical Implications." It is a good example of the recent interest in the material aspects in biblical studies, with special attention to the evidence from Qumran. All relevant text-critical material is listed, with a helpful synopsis of the text of Gen 50:22–Exod 1:10 in the Masoretic Text, the Samaritan Pentateuch (following the forthcoming critical edition of Stefan Schorch), and the (Göttingen) Septuagint.

In his well-presented overview of the history of research, Konrad Schmid ("The Sources of the Pentateuch, Their Literary Extent and the Bridge between Genesis and Exodus: A Survey of Scholarship since Astruc") shows that the literary separation of the "non-Priestly" material in Genesis and Exodus as it is discussed in recent research in many ways repeats the arguments used by critical scholars since the beginning of the eighteenth century. He also suppresses all optimism about finding a plausible solution to the literary-historical problem of the connection between the two books, with the appropriate remark that without the manuscripts from biblical times none of the diachronic hypotheses can be verified or falsified.

In line with this reticence, Joel S. Baden ("The Lack of Transition between Genesis 50 and Exodus 1") states that "it is the claim of discontinuity that has the burden of proof" (53). Jan Christian Gertz, in "The Relative Independence of the Books of Genesis and Exodus," takes the other position, denying that in its present form Exodus connects directly to the preceding narrative in Genesis and attempting a new distinction between Priestly, pre-Priestly, and post-Priestly material. Reinhard Müller responds by remarking that Baden and Gertz make similar observations based on the manuscript evidence from Qumran about the nonidentity of scrolls and books but come to opposite conclusions concerning the narrative continuity between Genesis and Exodus. He adds his own analysis, mostly in line with that of Gertz but also problematizing some elements.

The contributions on the larger context of Genesis and Exodus start with David M. Carr's "Joseph between Ancestors and Exodus: A Gradual Process of Connection," which sketches "the development of an independent Joseph story into a bridge between ancestors and Exodus-Moses" (103). Franziska Ede's "The Literary Development of the Joseph Story" presents the results of her dissertation ("Die Josephsgeschichte," 2016). In his response Bernd U. Schipper notices that they agree that there was already on the level of the pre-Priestly text a connection between Genesis and Exodus. Against this, Schipper emphasizes the importance of the post-Priestly redaction.

Useful presentations and discussions of the many parallels between the two books are given by Detlef Jericke ("Exodus Material in the Book of Genesis"), Wolfgang Oswald

(“Genesis Material in the Book of Exodus: Explicit Back References”), and Hans-Christoph Schmitt (“Parallel Narrative Patterns between Exodus 1–14 and the Ancestral Stories in Genesis 24 and 29–31”).

The second part of the volume, on the transition from Joshua to Judges, starts again with the presentation of the relevant material, this time by Harald Samuel, “The Attestation of the Book-Seam in the Early Textual Witnesses and Its Literary Historical Implications,” and of the history of interpretation by Erasmus Gaß, “Joshua’s Death Told Twice—Perspectives from the History of Research.” Just as Konrad Schmid in the related article, Gaß concludes that “the compositional knot between the book of Joshua and Judges has yet to be convincingly untangled. The arguments used are often not decisive and can be used in several ways” (219). This is confirmed in the following contributions.

Erhard Blum is one of the most often quoted scholars in this field, since he published his “Der kompositionelle Knoten am Übergang von Josua zu Richter: Ein Entflechtungsvorschlag” (1997). In his present contribution, “Once Again: The Compositional Knot at the Transition between Joshua and Judges,” he announces that he will “clarify and correct” some of his earlier judgments (221). This is done in discussion with recent research and in the end leads to a more complicated reconstruction. Reinhard G. Kratz (“The Literary Transition in Joshua 23–Judges 2: Observations and Considerations”) and Sarah Schulz (“The Literary Transition between the Books of Joshua and Judges”) add to the confusion. In his response Cristian Frevel remarks that, “although all three share various observations on textual problems, their arguments are almost incommensurable, and all lead to different conclusions” (283). By adding his own, again deviating interpretation (which was already summarized by Gaß) he adds an extra argument for his conclusion that “investigating the book-seam between Joshua and Judges reveals more problems than solutions” (293).

In the part on the larger context, Zev I. Farber and Jacob L. Wright, in “The Savior of Gibeon: Reconstructing the Prehistory of the Joshua Account,” try to prove that Joshua “began as a local Ephraimite warrior” (310). Daniel E. Fleming studies “The Shiloh Ritual in Joshua 18 as Origin of the Territorial Division by Lot.” Uwe Becker (“The Place of the Book of Judges in the So-Called Deuteronomistic History: Some Remarks on Recent Research”) is one of the many authors who was asked for a contribution on the basis of his earlier work on the subject, but also one of the few authors who has the courage to deviate from his earlier views. He now concludes that the book of Judges “originated as a bridge and is at its core oriented against the monarchy” (350). Cynthia Edenburg’s “Envelopes and Seams: How Judges Fits (or Not) within the Deuteronomistic History” presents a plausible reconstruction of the growth of the text of the book of Judges as the work of scribes appending new texts at the beginning and end of the scroll. In his reaction

to Becker and Edenburg, “The Book of Judges within the Deuteronomistic History,” Peter Porzig shows that the discussion in some ways repeats what was already proposed by Theodor Nöldeke at the end of the nineteenth century, but he also brings in new material matters.

Christoph Berner’s “The Two Book-Seams and Their Interconnections” introduces the final part of the volume, which pays attention to the parallels between the two book-seams. In “The Literary Relationship between Genesis 50–Exodus 1 and Joshua 24–Judges 2,” Stephan Germany attempts a reconstruction of the process by which the two book-seams mutually influenced each other. Jean Louis Ska’s “Plot and Story in Genesis–Exodus and Joshua–Judges” focusses on the role of the parallel texts of Exod 1:6, 8 and Judg 2:8–10 within the narrative flow between the books.

The editors of this volume must be complimented for organizing the discussion in this volume because of the interaction between the different contributions. It is also to be welcomed that this discussion, which was—and to a large extent still is—a discussion between German scholars, is now presented in English. Most German quotations are also given in English translation. Stephen Germany is deservedly thanked by the editors for his work of the English editing.

It has proven to be worthwhile to relate the study of the two book-seams and also the perspective on material matters concerning the scrolls. From a methodological point of view, it is clear that in the attempt to explain the tensions and repetitions in the transition from Genesis to Exodus and from Joshua to Judges the emphasis is on a diachronic approach. However, with Baden, quoted above, it can be remarked that the assumed discontinuity cannot be simply taken for granted. More room could have been given to attempts to make sense of the present text or at least to the suggestion that the final form of the text was more than the imperfect outcome of all kinds of redactional activities. It is understandable that a purely synchronic approach is passed over, but it can be regarded as an omission that the work of a scholar such as Serge Frolov is mostly neglected. Especially his form-critical approach in his contribution on Judges in the series *Forms of the Old Testament Literature* (2013) contains interesting alternative answers to the questions raised. It is also noteworthy that this led him (in a review of Edenburg’s book) to question the validity and utility of historical-critical biblical scholarship (*Hebrew Studies* 57 [2016]: 437).

Many readers will be impressed, if not intimidated, by the detailed and sophisticated discussions. It should also be noted that the results are hardly motivating. Time and again it is remarked that, despite the new attempts undertaken, a broadly accepted solution of the noted problems is not in sight. Readers may feel as being condemned like Sisyphus:

reading one unsuccessful attempt to solve the problems after another is like rolling up the heavy boulder to the top of the mountain only to experience that it will not be reached and that one has to start all over again. Frevel's remark that all three papers on the book-seam between Joshua and Judges "make considerable progress" (283) may be too polite. Müller ends his evaluation with the appeal: "we should not give up trying to understand how the text originated and developed. Careful consideration of the various options must be continued" (83). On the basis of the considerations in this volume, one may hope that also some new options will be found to explore.