

prejudice the case by assuming similar events in the Pentateuch to be contradicting accounts of the same traditional story.

4 ~~IV~~. Repetition in Ancient Literature

Often a writer will summarize long sections in one or two sentences. Sometimes the summary will be at the beginning, as Jacob's good fortune at Nahor, alluded to in Gen. 31:1 and further described in verses 4-16. Other times the summary comes at the end, as the birth of Ishmael, mentioned in Gen. 16:15-16 after being narrated in verses 1-14. Often the summary statement will emphasize a particular truth implied in the narrative; Gen. 19:29 calls attention to God's mercy shown to Abraham's nephew, Lot, when the Lord destroyed the wicked cities Sodom and Gomorrah. Summary statements need not imply multiple authorship; rather, they are accepted literary devices to help the readers picture and remember the material.

The flood account already has been mentioned. Since the flood involves great and dramatic concepts, one would expect an exciting, descriptive narrative. Such, indeed, is the fact. Any lively account gains in dramatic effect through pictorial words and phrases, repeated often to impress the reader's mind and imagination. Ancient Oriental literature is known for that characteristic; remember the abundant repetitions in the Gilgamesh Epic. The story of Eleazer's finding Isaac's wife gains tremendously in human interest by using repetition (Gen. 24:13-14, 17-20, 42-44, 45-46); and it is generally assigned to a single document, J. Frequent repetition, either in the form of summary