NUMBERS ARTICLES

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VOWING AWAY THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT: MATTHEW 15:3-6//MARK 7:9-13

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I. Introduction

Religious vows are prominent in ancient Judaism. This study examines the evidence that in the first-century CE a son could make a vow that would keep him from honoring his parents as commanded in the fifth of the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:2; Deut 5:16). This practice, mentioned in Matt 15:3-6//Mark 7:9-13, had the effect of vowing away the fifth commandment. The practice may have been rare and controversial, but it was a phenomenon that could occur in ancient Judaism.

Since God required that vows be kept, problems arose when a vow was made that violated the Torah. In this study, I trace the development of such vows within Judaism and show that the NT bears witness to the practice by which a person could make a vow that superseded requirements of the fifth commandment. I also show that such vows encountered opposition by the rabbis and eventually became unthinkable for pious Jews by the time of the Babylonian Talmud.

II. Significant Terms

A vow is a promise made in a religious context, usually to God. Vows tend to be promises to perform, or to abstain from, specific actions. In biblical and rabbinic Hebrew, the most common terms for "vow" are the verb רַדָּנ and the noun רַדָּנ. The corresponding Aramaic terms are the verb רַדָּנ and the noun רַדָּנ. The most common Greek terms for "vow" are the verb εὐαίμων and the noun εὐαίμων.

A vow is a solemn promise or assertion directed toward God. Vows in ancient Judaism can be divided into two basic types. The positive vow promises to perform an act or to offer a gift or sacrifice as a votive offering. The negative vow promises to abstain from something, imposing a prohibition on the one who made the vow or others. Vows in ancient Judaism were closely related to oaths, and sometimes the terms were used interchangeably. The common Hebrew terms are 'ii3J':IW "oath and יבמ "swear, take an oath." The Greek terms are o@kοj , "oath," and ojμνωv , "swear, take an oath." An oath is a solemn, formal calling upon God as witness to the truth of words directed toward other human beings.

Another important term is the Hebrew noun נברג. In rabbinic Hebrew this noun introduces a vow to abstain from something by declaring an object to have the status of a consecrated offering as far as the one prohibited by the vow is concerned. This usage is a development from biblical Hebrew in which the term occurs frequently but simply to denote a literal "gift, offering, or sacrifice." In 2 H. Liddell and R. Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon (9th ed., H. Jones and R. McKenzie; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940) 739 (hereinafter cited LSJM, Lexicon); W. Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (trans. W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, 2nd ed. rev. F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979) 329 (hereinafter cited BAGD, Lexicon); J. Hermann and H. Greeven, "euγομαι," TDNT 2:775-808.


4 BDB, Lexicon, 989-90; Jastrow, Dictionary, 1511, 1515.


6 E. Klinger, "Vows and Oaths," The Encyclopedia of Religion (ed. Mircea Eliade; 15 vols.; New York: Macmillan, 1987) 15:301. In this study it will be evident that the Jews often blurred the distinction between oaths and vows, especially in regard to vows that negatively affected others.

7 BDB, Lexicon. 898; Jastrow, Dictionary. 1411: J. Klihlewein, "ב פ" Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament (ed. E. Jenni and C. Westerman; trans. M. Biddle; 3 vols. (Peabody: Hendrikson, 1997) 3:1164-69; R. Averbeck, "תנניר , New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis (ed. W. VanGemeren; 5 vols.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997) 3 :979-82. The noun occurs 80 times in the Hebrew Bible, with 40 of those occurrences in Leviticus. Both the noun and cognate verb are associated with the Israelite concept of drawing near to God in worship by presenting a consecrated gift as a sacrificial offering. While the law specified many gifts such as burnt offerings, grain offerings, and peace offerings, it also was possible to vow voluntarily to God other gifts from one's property. After the loss of the Temple, even the study of the Torah concerning
rabbinic literature it is used both as a designation for actual sacrificial offerings [and as a technical term that introduces a vow of abstinence from some object consecrated to God. In rabbinic texts, to avoid use of the actual word for sacrificial offering, the term commonly is replaced by the euphemism מַגִּיף.  

III. The Hebrew Bible

The Hebrew Bible indicates that vows were important in Israelite religion from an early period. With a vow a person was placed under solemn obligation to God to do something or to refrain from doing something. Vows were voluntary. Yet, once taken, they were to be fulfilled. The motive for vows was often a desire to obtain divine favor. They regularly have the form "If God does something for me, then I will do something for God." Except for the Nazirite vow, negative vows or vows of abstinence are rare in the Hebrew Bible. Vows intended to affect others negatively are even less common.

A few examples will demonstrate the importance of positive vows in the Hebrew Bible. Jacob vowed that if God would keep him safe, fed, and clothed until he returned, he would make the pillar at Bethel into a sanctuary and pay tithes (Gen 28:20-22; 31:13). The people of Israel vowed that if God would give them the land of Canaan, they would destroy its cities (Num 21:2). Jephthah vowed that if God would bring him home victorious, he would offer as a sacrifice whatever first came out of his house when he returned (Judg 11:30-40). Hannah vowed that if God would give her a son, she would dedicate him to God (1 Sam 1:11). In addition, the Psalms include many texts associated with making and fulfilling vows (Pss22:22-31; 50:14-15; 56:12-13; 61:8; 65:1-4; 66:13-20; 116:12-14).

Much of the information concerning vows is in the Pentateuch. Everything offered in fulfillment of a vow was to be of the highest quality (Lev 22:17-25). The vow of valuation allowed one person to vow another person, an animal, a building, or a portion of land, but then redeem what had been vowed by paying sacrifice was considered an offering to God.

8 Jastrow, Dictionary, 1335.
what it was worth to the priests (Lev 27:1-33). Whether made by a man or a woman, vows were absolutely binding (Num 30: 1-2). However, a vow made by an unmarried woman could be annulled the same day by her father, and a vow made by a married woman could be annulled the same day by her husband (Num 30:3-16). Vows were to be fulfilled at the place God chose: the temple in Jerusalem (Deut 12:6-18). Payment of a vow was not to be made with money obtained by immoral means (Deut 23:18); and even though vows were voluntary, they were most serious:

If you make a vow to the LORD your God, do not postpone fulfilling it; for the LORD your God will surely require it of you, and you would incur guilt. But if you refrain from vowing, you will not incur guilt. Whatever your lips utter you must diligently perform, just as you have freely vowed to the LORD your God with your own mouth (Deut 23:21-23).

The most notable vow of abstinence is the Nazirite vow. It required a person to abstain from grape products, from cutting the hair, and from contact with the dead (Num 6:1-21; Judg 13:4-5; 1 Sam 1:11; Amos 2:11-12). Another negative vow is the vow made by David that he would not enter his house, go to bed, or sleep until he had found a place for God's house (Ps 132:1-5). Also worth considering is an oath imposed by Saul upon Israel (1 Sam 14:24-45), when Saul laid an oath on the people, saying, "Cursed be anyone who eats food before it is evening" (1 Sam 14:24).

Later passages suggest that vows created practical difficulties and conflicts with the Law. Vows resulted in promises people failed to fulfill (Mal 1:14). The author of Ecclesiastes advises: "When you make a vow to God, do not delay fulfilling it; for he has no pleasure in fools. Fulfill what you vow. It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not fulfill it" (Eccl 5:4-5). Similarly, the book of Sirach teaches: "Let nothing hinder you from paying a vow promptly, and do not wait until death to be released from it. Before making a vow, prepare yourself; do not be like one who puts the Lord to the test" (Sir 18:22-23).

IV. Qumran

The most relevant source from Qumran is the Damascus Document (CD). The two incomplete medieval copies of this document were discovered in an old Cairo synagogue in 1896. Extensive fragments of the document were later found

in Caves 4, 5, and 6 at Qumran. The oldest fragments date from the early first century BCE. The most important text for this study begins at CD 16:6 and continues to CD 9:1.\(^{12}\)

And concerning the saying, "You shall keep your vow by fulfilling it (Deut 23:24 )," let no man, even at the price of death, annul any binding oath by which he has sworn to keep a commandment of the Law. But even at the price of death, a man shall fulfill no vow by which he has sworn to depart from the Law. Inasmuch as He said, "It is for her husband to cancel her oath (Num 30:9)," no husband shall cancel an oath without knowing whether it should be kept or not. Should it be such as to lead to transgression of the Covenant, he shall cancel it and shall not let it be kept. The rule for her father is likewise. No man shall vow to the altar anything unlawfully acquired. Also, no Priest shall take from Israel anything unlawfully acquired. And no man shall consecrate the food of his house to God, for it is as he said, "Each hunts his brother with a net (Mic 7:2)." Let no man consecrate. . . . And if he has consecrated to God some of his own field. . . he who has made the vow shall be punished. . . . Every vow by which a man vows another to destruction by the laws of the Gentiles shall himself be put to death.

This passage emphasizes the solemn nature of oaths and vows. It allows for annulment of vows of women that violate the law. It prohibits vows that dedicate wrongfully acquired property. It forbids vowing or consecrating personal property to affect others negatively. And it condemns the practice of vowing another person to destruction. The entire passage is based on Deut 23:21-23 (Matt 23:22-24) and Num 30:2-15 (Matt 30:3-16). However, the texts from the Hebrew Bible have been paraphrased, and the terms for oath and vow are used interchangeably. In addition, CD 16:6-18 uses הָעֲרָבָן ("something consecrated, dedicated, removed from profane use, vow"), הָנְבֶן ("freewill-offering, donation"), וְהָשַׁי ("sanctify, consecrate, dedicate"), וְיֵשַׁבְבֶה ("swear, vow"), הָשַׁי ("oath"), and הָעֲרָבָן ("swear, take an oath").\(^{13}\)

The text upholds the inviolability of the Law, requiring individuals to pay the price of death rather than transgress a commandment. The text does address the annulment of oaths and vows made by women, but any such annulment is limited only to oaths or vows that violate the community's covenant. Significant for this study are the admonitions concerning unacceptable vows, particularly the ruling "No man shall consecrate the food of his house to God, for it is as he said, 


'Each hunts his brother with a net' (Mic 7:2)." The prohibition is supported by a quotation from Mic 7:2: אִשָּׁ֣ה יְּדוּעָ֑ה יְּדוּעֵֽו. In CD 16:15, the noun יְּדוּעָ֑ו should be understood as "something consecrated, dedicated; vow;" rather than the homonym meaning "trap, net, snare." According to Fitzmyer, the text forbids "the dedication of any food to God so that it might not be used to help one's neighbor."  

V. Philo  

Philo of Alexandria, who lived from about 20 BCE to 50 CE, provides still another link in the tradition concerning vows. He regularly uses εὐξή and εὐξωμαί for "vow." His most extensive treatment of vows occurs in On the Special Laws. In 1.247-54 he discusses the 'great vow' of the Nazirite. In 2.1-38 he discusses rash oaths and vows, oaths and vows of women, and vows of valuation, all under the category εὐρκία, "fidelity to one's oath, the duty of keeping oaths." In 2.16 he comments on people who make oaths that negatively affect others. Here Philo uses ὀτοίον, "oath," rather than εὐξή "vow." But he often uses the terms interchangeably, and his statements in this text show how negative oaths or vows affecting others could be made by Jews in his time contrary to the law or good moral judgment:

But there are some who, either because through excessive moroseness their nature has lost the sense of compassion and fellow-feeling or because they are constrained by anger which rules them like a stem mistress, confirm the savagery of their temper with an oath. They declare that they will not admit such and such a person to their board or under their roof, or again, that they will not render assistance to so and so or accept anything from him till his life's end. Sometimes they carry on their vindictiveness after that end has come and leave directions in their wills against even granting the customary rites to the corpse.

Although the practice was not considered acceptable by Philo, this example provides evidence that oaths, and probably also vows, were used by Jews in his .


16 Philo, Allegorical Interpretation 1.17; 2.63; On the Unchangeableness of God 87; On Husbandry 175; On Drunkenness 2; On Mating with the Preliminary Studies 99; On Flight and Finding 115; Life of Moses 1.252; On the Decalogue 126; et al. See also Eusebius, Preparation for the Gospel 8. 7.

17 LSJM, Lexicon, 725.
day to prohibit individuals from receiving any assistance from the one who made the oath or vow.

VI. Archaeological Evidence

Two archaeological discoveries provide valuable information regarding the Jewish practice of making vows during the Second Temple period. In each case the term נְבֶרֶךְ was used to deny others the use of something by declaring an object to have the status of a consecrated offering.

The first discovery is a fragment of a stone vessel recovered from an excavation of a first-century-BCE Herodian street near the Temple in Jerusalem. The vessel, found among coins and other vessels, bears the inscription נְבֶרֶךְ most likely representing the Hebrew noun נבך. Along with this inscription is a carved depiction of two birdlike figures, suggesting some connection with the offering of two doves or pigeons (Lev 12:8). The vessel's inscription and its discovery along with coins indicate that its use was similar to the practice debated in the following passage from the Mishnah:

Any coins that are found are deemed unconsecrated, even if it was a golden denar found with silver coins. If a potsherd was found with them and on it was written 'Tithe,' they must be deemed (Second) Tithe (redemption money). If a man found a vessel and on it was written "Korban," R. Judah says: If it was of earthenware the vessel is to be deemed unconsecrated but its contents קְרָבָן; and if it was of metal it is to be deemed קְרָבָן but its contents unconsecrated. They said to him: It is not the way of men to put what is unconsecrated into what is קְרָבָן (m. Ma'aser Sheni 4:9-10).

The second discovery is an ossuary found southeast of Jerusalem. On the ossuary lid, written in a Herodian script from the end of the first century BCE, is the Aramaic inscription: כל דא אנס מנטו חלמה דה קרבון אינא תũ מ בובהו ("Everything that a man will find to his profit in this ossuary (is) an offering to God from the one within it)."

According to Milik, נברך is used as a male-diction or imprecation toward others. Fitzmyer claims the term still means "offering," but is used here as "a warning that whatever of value is in the ossuary

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22 Milik, "Trois tombeaux juifs," 235, 238, 239.
Significantly, the term נַעַמְלָם did not transfer the ossuary or its contents to the temple. Rather, this vow formula was used simply to declare something to be sacred and thus prohibit others from using it or obtaining benefit from it in any way.

VII. The New Testament

The practice of vowing is not common in the NT. The verb εὐῳμαί is not used meaning "vow," but only "pray" or "wish" (Acts 26:29; 27:29; Rom 9:3; 2 Cor 13:7, 9; Jas 5: 16; 3 John 2). The noun εὐῳ ὁς is used once meaning "prayer" (Jas 5:15) and twice meaning "vow" (Acts 18: 18; 21:23). References to oaths are more common. The noun ὀμοί, "oath," occurs ten times, and the verb ὄμνυ, "swear, take an oath," occurs twenty-six times. Most significantly, with the exception of oaths made by God or an angel, swearing of oaths is always portrayed in the NT as an undesirable act. Other significant terms include ἄναγεμα ("anything dedicated, a curse") and ἄναγεματίζω ("curse, bind with an oath").

The one clear NT example of a negative vow forbidding the use of something by others is in Matt 15:3-6 and Mark 7:9-13. Here Jesus speaks to some Pharisees about a conflict between their oral tradition and the Scriptures. The key sentence occurs in Matt 15:5 and Mark 7:11-12. It describes a practice by which a son could make a vow prohibiting his parents from receiving any benefit from him, thus exempting him from honoring them with material support. This violated not only the commandment to honor one's parents (Exod 20:12; Deut 5:16) but also the commandment not to speak evil of one's parents (Exod 21:17; Lev 20:9). According to both Matthew and Mark, Jesus accused the Pharisees of upholding the validity of such a vow that would prevent a person from doing anything for his parents.

25 BAGD, Lexicon, 329.
26 BAGD, Lexicon, 565,566,581. See also: εὐῳκεν, "cause someone to swear"; ἐξωρκίζω, "charge under oath"; and ὀμφίς, "cause someone to swear"; ὀμφίς, "oath, taking an oath."
Matt 15:3-6
3) He answered them, "And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?
4) For God said, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and 'Whoever speaks evil of father or mother must surely die.'
5) But you say that whoever tells father or mother, 'Whatever support you might have had from me is given to God,' then that person need not honor the father.
6) So, for the sake of your tradition, you make void the word of God."

Mark 7:9-13
9) Then he said to them, "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition!
10) For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and 'Whoever speaks evil of father or mother must surely die.'
11) But you say that if anyone tells father or mother, 'Whatever support you might have had from me is Corban' (that is, an offering to God)--
12) then you no longer permit doing anything for a father or mother,
13) thus making void the word of God through your tradition that you have handed on. And you do many things like this."

According to Mark 7:11, the vow was introduced by the formula "Whatever support you might have had from me is Corban." The term korbaḥ is simply a transliteration of the Hebrew קרבא or the Aramaic קרבא. Mark explains this term with the clause οἶνος τίνι δώρῳν, "that is, an offering to God." Matthew simply has the translation δώρῳν. Thus קרבא or קרבא was understood in the first century CE to mean "gift, offering" while also functioning as a technical term in a vow formula that prohibited others from deriving benefit from that which was dedicated.

Scholars are divided over whether a vow formula like the one preserved in Mark 7:11 actually dedicated the designated object to the temple or simply declared the object to have the status of consecrated property as far as certain individuals were concerned. Derrett has argued that the person who made the vow could not continue to use the property, but was required to give the property

28 BAGD, Lexicon, 210-11.
or its value to the Temple. However, Derrett's argument is based entirely on later rabbinic rulings concerning vows of valuation and does not consider earlier evidence.

In an age when the Temple still stood, the formula may well have been used to dedicate property that would subsequently be given as an offering to God. Yet the previous evidence examined in this study suggests that the formula was also used to prohibit others from using something by declaring it consecrated as far as they were concerned. The person who made the vow could retain possession of the property as before, and only those toward whom the vow had been directed could have no further use of it. Still, the effectiveness of this vow was based on the belief that such a declaration gave objects consecrated status, even if only with limited application.

However, would the Pharisees actually have upheld a vow that violated the Law of Moses? For scholars such as E. P. Sanders, this would not have been possible. At least not as it is portrayed in the Gospels. According to Sanders, even if some odd Pharisee may have done this at some time, the Pharisees as a whole were not guilty of teaching people to act in this way. Instead, according to Sanders, most Pharisees would have condemned the practice just as Jesus did. Thus the story preserved by Matthew and Mark must be considered part of the anti-Jewish or anti-Pharisaical polemic of the early church and not dependable evidence for an accepted practice within the tradition of the Pharisees in the first-century CE.

In response to Sanders, it must be pointed out that his claim is based on the presupposition that the teaching of the Pharisees is preserved in later rabbinic texts. However, the tradition passed on by the Pharisees was not identical with that of the later rabbis, but underwent considerable development? One area in which such development occurred was the tradition concerning vows. As Saul Lieberman has shown, the practice of making all kinds of oaths and vows

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30 J. D. M. Derrett, "KORBAN, O EST IN DWRON " NTS 16 (1970) 364-68.
presented a constant challenge to rabbis in the formative period of Judaism. Albert Baumgarten has argued very convincingly that the Pharisees of the first-century CE probably taught that only a limited number of vows could be released and that they probably would have required a son to fulfill a vow even like the one recorded in the Gospels.

The vow described by Jesus may have been due to anger, selfishness, or even misguided religious zeal. However, to uphold the sacredness of vows, the Pharisees were apparently bound by oral tradition to enforce and not annul such avow.

VIII. Josephus

The writings of the Jewish author Josephus contain two passages that include korba\n\n\n, a transliteration of either the Hebrew noun \n\n\n or the Aramaic noun \n\n\n similar to Mark 7:11. In Antiquities 4.73, Josephus says that the term korba\n\n was used as a vow by those who declared themselves a "gift," dw\n\n, for God, apparently referring to the vow of valuation (Lev 27:1-33). In Against Apion 1.167, he reports that according to Theophrastus the use of korba\n\n as an "oath"(ot koj) was forbidden by the people of Tyre. Josephus then comments: "Now this oath will be found in no other nation except the Jews, and, translated from the Hebrew, one may interpret it as meaning 'God's gift.' "Josephus's translation "God's gift," dw\n\n qeou? confirms that the idea of an offering or consecration of something to God was still behind the formulaic use of the term in the first century CE.

IX. The Mishnah

The Mishnah treats oaths and vows at length. Although primarily informative regarding the time of its completion around 200 CE, the Mishnah also provides some insight into earlier development of Jewish law. The rulings on vows before 70 CE dealt with the invalid nature of vows made in error or under constraint. From 70-140CE, general principles for abrogating vows were

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36 The Greek text and English translation used for this study are from Josephus (Thackeray, LCL).
worked out. After 140 CE, the language of vows was subjected to greater clarification. The general trend was to restrict frivolous vows and to annul unacceptable ones.³⁸

The main treatment of oaths is found in tractate Sebu’oth ("Oaths").³⁹ The most extensive treatment of vows is found in tractates Nazir ("Nazirite Vow"), ‘Arakin ("Vows of Valuation"), and especially Nedarim ("Vows").⁴⁰ According to Neusner, the predominate concern of the tractate Nedarim is "the power of a person to affect his or her concrete and material relationships with other people through invoking the name of heaven."⁴¹ In this tractate, the rabbis attempt to regulate the practice of vowing, to prevent improper vows, and to provide for release from harmful or unjust vows because "vows will be taken primarily under emotional duress and express impatience and frustration. They are not predictable and never follow upon a period of sober reflection."⁴²

The passages in the Mishnah of primary interest for this study are those that deal with negative vows, or vows of abstinence or prohibition. Many of these passages use יָרַק.⁴³ Even more frequent is the euphemism יָרַק.⁴⁴ The following passages from the Mishnah are significant because they include the use of these terms in negative vows, or vows of abstinence intended to prohibit the use of something by someone other than the person who made the vow:

(If a man said to his fellow,) "May I be to thee as a thing that is banned!" he against whom the vow is made is forbidden (to have any benefit from him); (if he said,) "Be thou to me as a thing that is banned!" he that makes the vow is forbidden (to have any benefit from the other); (if he said,) "May I be to thee and thou to me (as a thing that is banned)," then each is forbidden (to have any benefit from the other). (m. Nedarim 5:4)
If a man was forbidden by vow to have any benefit from his fellow, and he had
naught to eat, his fellow may give (the food) to another as a gift, and the first is
permitted to use it. It once happened that a man at Beth Horon, whose father was
forbidden by vow to have any benefit from him, was giving his son in marriage,
and he said to his fellow, "The courtyard and the banquet are given to thee as a
gift, but they are thine only that my father may come and eat with us at the
banquet." His fellow, said, "If they are mine, they are dedicated to Heaven." The
other answered, "I did not give thee what is mine that thou shouldst dedicate it to
Heaven." His fellow said, "Thou didst give me what is thine only that thou and thy
father might eat and drink and be reconciled one with the other, and that the sin
should rest on his head!" (m. Nedarim 5:6)

So, too, if a man said to his fellow, "Konam be the benefit thou hast from me if
thou come not and give my son a kor of wheat and two jars of wine!" R. Meir
says: The vow is binding until he gives (him them). But the Sages say: He, too,
may break his vow without recourse to a Sage, and he can say to his fellow, "Lo, it
is as though I had already received them." (m. Nedarim 8:7)

R. Ehezer says: They may open for men the way (to repentance) by reason of the
honour due to father and mother. But the Sages forbid it. R. Zadok said: Rather
than open the way for a man by reason of the honour due to father and mother,
they should open the way for him by reason of the honour due to God; but if so,
there could be no vows. But the Sages agree with R. Eliezer that in a matter
between a man and his father and mother, the way may be opened to him by
reason of the honour due to his father and mother. (m. Nedarim 9:1)

If a man said to his son, "Konam be any benefit thou hast of mine!" and he died,
the son may inherit from him; (but if moreover he said) "both during my life and
at my death!" when he dies the son may not inherit from him and he must restore
(what he had received from his father at any time) to the father's sons or brothers;
and if he has naught (wherewith to repay) he must borrow, and the creditors come
and exact payment. (m. Baba Kamma 9:10)

The preceding passages demonstrate that at the time of the Mishnah negative
vows could affect other people, even spouses, parents, or children. Some vows
were declared with the intent of denying benefit to others. The most significant
texts are m. Ned. 9:1 and m. B. Qamma. 9:10. In m. Ned. 9:1, in spite of debate,
the Sages agreed "in a matter between one and his father and his mother," a son
could be released from a vow "by reason of the honor due to his father and his
mother." A vow such as that described in Mark 7:11 was a vow that could be
annulled. This is a change from the situation in Mark 7:12, where Jewish
teachers would not permit one who made such a vow to do anything for his
parents. And in m. Baba Kamma 9:10, it is the father who declares מִיְּסָף any
benefit that his son might have from him. It was possible for a son to vow away
obligations toward his parents, but the rabbis of the Mishnah would declare such
a vow voidable. As Z. W. Falk observed, "had the son approached them, they
would have taught him to annul his vow and abide by the rules of filial duty."  

Still, the Mishnah considers rules of release from vows to "hover in the air and have naught to support them" (*m. Hagigah* 1:8).

Sometimes, he says, when money-lenders fell in with stubborn debtors who were able but not willing to pay their debts, they consecrated what was due to the account of the poor, for whom money was cast into the treasury by each of those who wished to give a portion of their goods to the poor according to their ability. They, therefore, said sometimes to their debtors in their own tongue, "That which you owe to me is Corban," that is, a gift, "for I have consecrated it to the poor, to the account of piety towards God." Then the debtor, as no longer in debt to men but to God and to piety towards God, was shut up, as it were, even though unwilling, to payment of the debt, no longer to the money-lender, but now to God for the account of the poor, in the name of the money-lender. (*Commentary on Matthew* 11:9)

X. The Yerushalmi

The Yerushalmi, also known as the Palestinian Talmud or Talmud of the Land of Israel, is the next significant source for this study. Completed around 400 CE, it contains a systematic exegesis of thirty-nine of the Mishnah's sixty-two tractates. The Yerushalmi contains numerous stories concerning the sages and how they found grounds for absolving vows. Some passages speak of oaths

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45 Falk, "On Talmudic Vows," 311.
47 The Hebrew/Aramaic text of the Yerushalmi used for this study is from *Talmud Yerushalmi*, (7 vols.; New York: M. P., 1976). English quotations are taken from J. Neusner, ed., *The Talmud of the Land of Israel* (35 vols.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982-1986). There were other compilations of Jewish law produced between the Mishnah and Yerushalmi. The work *m. Aboth*, compiled around 250 CE, contains only two brief references to vows (3:14; 4:18), neither of which concerns negative vows. The Tosefta, compiled around 300 CE, omits much of the Mishnah's discussion of negative vows, especially expletive vows. Of the Mishnaic texts discussed previously, the Tosefta does not include *m. Nedarim* 5:6 and 9:1 and includes only a small portion of *m. Nedarim* 8:7.
and vows interchangeably (y. Ned. I: 1 VI; 5:4 IV; 9: I V). Other passages distinguish oaths from vows by claiming that only vows were capable of being absolved by the rabbis (y. Ned. 11:111). According to Jacob Neusner, what is important is that "in its account of the public conduct of the rabbi, the Talmud provides ample evidence that rabbis found grounds for absolution of vows and told people about them."  

The Yerushalmi discusses m. Ned. 5:4; 5:6; and 8:7, but it provides no additional information. It treats m. Ned. 9:1 more thoroughly, including some material found only herein rabbinic literature. In particular, y. Ned. 9:1 I-IV contains various rulings on the proper grounds for release from vows. Immediately afterward y. Ned 9:1 in attempts to explain what the rabbis of the Mishnah must have meant in m. Ned. 9:1 in the matter between a son and his parents:

> How shall we interpret the matter? If he says, "Benefit deriving from me is forbidden to father," then we must invoke that which was said by R. Jacob bar Aha, R. Samuel bar Nahman in the name of R. Jonathan: "They force the son to provide maintenance for the father." But thus we must interpret the matter: It is a case in which he has said, "Benefit deriving from father is prohibited to me."

The rabbis of the Yerushalmi record an interpretation that the son had made a vow forbidding his father from receiving "benefit" (Ὁμούκτωρον), the financial support due to his parents. But they conclude this could not be the correct meaning of the Mishnah. The command to "honor" one's parents was sufficient reason to absolve the vow and force the son to provide for his father. Therefore, they explain the text to mean that the son had vowed not to receive any benefit from his father.

### XI. The Bavli

The Bavli, also called the Babylonian Talmud, dates from 500-600 CE. Like the Yerushalmi, the Bavli provides an exposition of over half the Mishnah. In addition to organizing the work around the structure of the Mishnah, the compilers of the Bavli produced a synthesis of all rabbinic literature, drawing on previous Mishnah exegesis in the Tosefta, the Yerushalmi, and previous Scripture exegesis in the various midrashim. All this material was selectively shaped into the "classical statement" of rabbinic Judaism. As Louis Jacobs has

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51 The text and translation of the Bavli used for this study is from I. Epstein, ed., *Hebrew-English Edition of the Babylonian Talmud* (London: Soncino, 1962-).
observed, "the compilers were creative artists, reshaping all the earlier material to produce a literary work."53

The Bavli shows significant developments in rabbinic attitudes toward vows. These include emphasis on fulfilling all binding vows, opposition to vow taking in general, and increased efforts to find ways of releasing people from improper vows. In b. *Shabbath* 32b the rabbis say failure to fulfill a vow can result in the death of one's wife and children.54 In b. *Ta'anith* 4a the rabbis criticize the vow of Jephthah (Judg 11:30-40) and link it with worship of Baal.55 In dealing with, annulling vows, b. *Yebamoth* states: "R. Nathan said 'If a man makes a vow it is as if he has built a high place and if he fulfills it, it is as if he has offered up a sacrifice upon it."56 After quoting the biblical injunction on vows in Eccl 5:4, b. *Hullin* 2a says: "And it has been taught: Better than both is he who does not vow at all; this is the opinion of R. Meir. R. Judah says, Better than both is he who vows and pays."57

As in the Mishnah and Yerushalmi, the most extensive treatment of vows in the Bavli is *Nedarim* ("Vows"). Here the Bavli intensifies its opposition to vows, offers examples of rabbis granting release from vows, but demands fulfillment of binding vows. Numerous passages repeat that any vow that appears to violate biblical commands must not really violate them or must be annulled (b. *Nedarim* 13b; 14a; 15a; 15b; 16a; 16b; 17a; et al.). The practice of taking vows is discouraged: "Never make a practice of vowing, for ultimately you will trespass in the matter of oaths" (b. *Nedarim* 20a). Occasionally, rulings attempt to save the practice from condemnation (b. *Nedarim* 21b). However, in general, vowing is seen as undesirable, as the rabbis once told a man who sought release from a vow: "Go and pray for mercy, for you have sinned. For R. Dimi, the brother of R. Safra, learnt: He who vows, even though he fulfills it, is designated a sinner" (b. *Nedarim* 77b).

54 Similar warnings concerning vows are found in Leviticus Rabbah 37:1, where a man's unfulfilled vows result in idolatry, fornication, and bloodshed, including the death of his wife and himself. Also Genesis Rabbah 81:1 explains that when a man delays to fulfill his vow, God examines his ledger.
55 A similar disapproval occurs in Genesis Rabbah 60:3 and Leviticus Rabbah 37:4, where it is emphasized that Jephthah should have obtained release from his vow by appealing to Phineas.
56 Opposition to vows was so strong that sayings attributed to the rabbis in Leviticus Rabbah 37:2-3 state that whoever takes a vow and whoever annuls a vow deserve to be stabbed with a sword. Still, anyone who makes a vow is urged to go to a rabbi and beg "for release. See also b. *Nedarim* 22a.
57 See also b. *Nedarim* 9a; Leviticus Rabbah 37:1.
The passages of the Mishnah concerning negative vows of prohibition that affect others are not at all important for the compilers of the Bavli. For example, the Bavli's treatment of *m. Nedarim* 9:1 in *b. Nedarim* 64a-65a lacks the discussion that is found in *y. Nedarim* 9:1 V A-B. The rabbis of the Yerushalmi concluded that the Mishnah could not have meant that a son could make a vow forbidding him from supporting his parents, but they did record the earlier view that it could happen. The rabbis of the Bavli omit all discussion of this issue. The issue had been settled, and it was no longer even a faint memory that a person seeking to live as a faithful Jew could vow away the fifth commandment.

**XII. Conclusion**

A major issue in the development of Jewish law concerning vows is the possible conflict between keeping a vow and keeping the commandments of the written Torah. Evidence from the Hebrew Bible, Qumran, Philo, and archaeological information indicates that prior to the first century AD negative vows that affected others were already being made. Mark 7:9-13 shows that, in the first century CE, a son could make a vow using the term *qorban* and prohibit his parents from receiving support from him. Even though such a vow violated the fifth commandment, some Jewish teachers upheld such avow, perhaps because of the biblical teaching on the inviolability of vows. The NT and Josephus indicate that the use of the term *qorban* as a vow formula was still associated with the idea of an offering. Later the Mishnah set forth rulings making such a vow clearly voidable because of the honor due to one's parents. For rabbis of the Yerushalmi, the practice was understandable, though rejected. By the time of the Bavli, the rabbis did not contemplate it, for one could no longer vows away the fifth commandment.

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THE STORIES OF THE BIBLE are filled with geographical information. The Scriptures refer often to details of topography, geology, hydrology, climate, land use, and urbanization. Noted biblical geographer George Adam Smith challenges people to read the Bible with geographical awareness. "In the Bible, you see the details which are so characteristic of every Eastern landscape, the chaff and rolling thorns blown before the wind, the dirt cast out on the streets; the broken vessel by the well; the forsaken house; the dusty grave. Let us pay attention to all these, and we shall surely feel ourselves in the atmosphere and scenery in which David fought, and Elisha went and Malachi saw the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings."\(^1\)

Geography shaped the events of biblical history. Attention to "narrative geography" recognizes that biblical writers used geography not only to provide the setting of events but also to achieve strategic, literary ends. As Shimon Bar-Efrat has observed, "Places in the narrative are not merely geographical facts, but are to be regarded as literary elements in which fundamental significance is embodied."\(^2\)

This article addresses the strategic use of geography in Numbers 13, with attention to what may be called the narrative-geographical shaping of the story. Throughout Numbers 13 Moses used, reused, and nuanced geographical elements in patterns designed to impact the reader. Geographical references were noted to

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generate expectations, to raise or lower the tension of the plot, and to mold the reader's view of the characters.

Moses identified and instructed twelve men to explore the new land and report back to him. The report they brought back (exclusive of Joshua and Caleb) was negative. The report carefully and deceitfully used geography to argue that the Israelites could not enter the Promised Land. This became a watershed moment in Israel's history, for it inspired a rebellion that lasted forty years.

PREPARATION FOR THE REPORT

LITERARY NAMING OF THE SPIES

Two types of naming were used to introduce the spies. They were characterized first as a group and then as individuals.

Moses was instructed to send on this mission men who met specific standards. Each was to be a "leader" (ןֵכַר, Num. 13:2). As a group, they are called "men" (םִשְׁךְּאֵלֶּנָּא, v. 3) and "heads of the sons of Israel." These are designations for significant tribal leaders. In Genesis 42:9, Joseph accused his brothers of being "military scouts" (מַלְאֵף מַלְאָכָם) who had come to spy out the land. When Joshua sent men into Jericho (Josh. 2:1), he called them מַלְאֵף מַלְאָכָם. But the men chosen here by Moses were not these "military scouts"; they were influential men whose report could sway the community.

This more general form of characterization gives way to a lengthy list in which the spies are named individually. In formulaic fashion the twelve are designated by tribe, proper name, and paternal association (13:4-15). The reason this list was organized this way remains under discussion. But the fact that these men were identified in such a list has import for their characterization.

3 Within Jewish tradition even the designation שֶׁכֶר suggests that these were men of honor. This is the meaning of this designation in Genesis 34:20; Exodus 17:9; Judges 8:15-17; 1 Samuel 17:12; and 2 Samuel 1:11 (A. M. Silbermann, Numbers, Chumash with Rashi’s Commentary [Jerusalem: Silbermann, 1934], 62; and H. Freedman and Maurice Simon, Midrash Rabbah, Numbers [New York: Soncino, 1983], 676).


6 Robert Alter has noted that such lists are often ignored within literary analysis. In reality they may be effectively employed as literary devices. "The coldest catalogue and the driest etiology may be an effective subsidiary instrument of literary expression" ("Introduction to the Old Testament," in The Literary Guide to the Bible, ed. Robert Alter and F. Kermode [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987], 16).
grants them "a sense of importance and dignity." Thus by both general designation and personal introduction, the reader is led to view these men as esteemed and honored leaders of the community. Thus the reader anticipates that the report the twelve gave will be both persuasive and honorable.

THE SEARCH DEFINITION
The reader is further prepared to hear the spies' report by noting Moses' instructions for the recognizance mission. In defining that search Moses pointed out a considerable amount of geographical features. He provided the geographical boundaries of the search, the season in which the search was conducted, and the specific geographical questions the group were to answer.

The search area. The search area is defined both by Moses' direct speech and by the narrator's summary of the search. In 13:17 the reader is allowed to listen in as Moses told the spies where they were to go. In 13:2 the reader learns that the spies would reconnoiter "the land of Canaan." But Moses became more specific by telling the spies to search the Negeb (נגב) and the hill country (רוח), two regions within the land of Canaan. "As a regional-geographical term, Negeb refers to a limited strip of land extending 10 miles north and 10 miles south of Beersheba and running east to west from the mountain ridge overlooking the Rift Valley to near the dunes along the Mediterranean Sea."8

Moses was also interested in the hill country. The word רוח in the Book of Numbers is most often employed in the proper names of prominent mountains such as Mount Sinai (3:1, פִּינֵי סִינָא רוח). But here it is clearly a regional designation, for it is set in contrast to the coastal plain and the Jordan Valley (13:29). The rising terrain of the hill country runs from the Negeb through Judea, Samaria, and into the highlands of Galilee.9

When the narrator described the trip itself, he spoke of the search area in a different way. Verse 21 refers to the trip's southern departure point and its northern terminating point. The spies explored the land from the Wilderness of Zin to Lebo-Hamath. The Wilderness of Zin is the northern portion of the Wilderness of Paran, specifically the area around Kadesh-barnea.10 Lebo is asso-

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9 Ashley, however, says the Negeb refers only to the hill country of Judah (The Book of Numbers, 236).
associated with the Lebweh near one source of the Orontes River in the Beqa' Valley. Thus the exploration of the spies is said to follow the watershed of the central mountain spine.

The narrator's language for the search area differs from the language Moses used. Why did the narrator not simply summarize the search with identical language? Noth says this signals multiple authorship. But within this unified literary unit a different explanation is to be preferred. The language of the narrator allows for the possibility that the spies did not adhere closely to Moses' instructions. The search he asked for may have been different from the one he received. Replication of Moses' language would certainly have signaled obedience. The shift in language adds tension to the plot, thereby urging the reader to look for further evidence that will either vindicate or implicate the spies.

One last difference between Moses' description and the narrator's summary bears mentioning. Moses did not identify any specific city he wanted the spies to visit, but the narrator stated that they stopped in Hebron (vv. 22-23). There they cut grapes from the Wadi Eshcol just north of Hebron.

*The search season.* In verse 20 the narrator wrote that "the time was the time of the first-ripe grapes." While the grape harvest itself would occur over the summer months, the first ripe grapes are harvested in July. Since the entire exploration took forty days (v. 25), this exploration took place during the summer season.

*The search questions.* Moses then defined the search itself with a set of questions (vv. 18-20). Knowing the search area and the

11 "Many scholars assumed that Lebo-Hamath should be translated as 'the entrance to Hamath.' However, there is really no doubt that Lebo was an important city on the border of the kingdom of Hamath and is to be identified with Lebweh" (Yohanan Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967], 72).


13 Martin Noth assumes that the different descriptions are associated with different authors. J and E limit the search to the Negeb and Judah, and P allows the search to extend to the entire nation (*Numbers: A Commentary* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968], 101).

14 Edward Robinson argues for this location of Wadi Eshcol based on the name of one of the four kings from the Hebron area who accompanied Abraham (Gen. 14:24; *Biblical Researches in Palestine and the Adjacent Regions 1838 and 1852* [Jerusalem: Universitas Booksellers, 1970], 1:214). This nineteenth-century observation about the location of Eshcals supported by a fourth-century Christian pilgrim text (Jerome, "The Pilgrimage of Holy Paula," in *Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society* [New York: AMS, 1971], 1:9).

search season, the geographically informed reader begins to anticipate how the answers to those questions might sound.

First, Moses asked for information on population density (v. 18). The archaeological record for the pre-Israelite period reveals what they may have seen. Mazar notes that the Late Bronze period (1550-1200 B.C.) testifies to a declining population in the hill country. Aharoni offers this summary of the Canaanite period: "The valleys were intensely settled, with strong and important kingdoms on the coastal plain and the Shephelah, in the Jezreel and Jordan valleys. Among the hill regions only the most northern enjoyed a dense settlement. . . . Most of the hill regions were only thinly settled, and appreciable areas were forested with thick scrub that was a formidable obstacle to settlement and agriculture. The southern and highest part of Upper Galilee and nearly all of Lower Galilee, except for the lateral valleys and the southern highlands, were not occupied." Given the search area designated by Moses, the spies would have encountered land that was sparsely settled.

The second question Moses asked pertained to the hydrology of the land (v. 19). "Is the land in which they live good or bad?" While this vocabulary is somewhat general, rabbinitic commentators distinguish it from the subsequent question about soil fertility (v. 20). Moses’ inquiry is no doubt related to the oppressive conditions the Israelites experienced in the Wilderness of Zin. Since that region receives less than two inches of precipitation each year, the Israelites constantly faced the shortage of water there.

In the Negeb the spies would have experienced a climate and

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16 Rashi sees the matter of population density at the heart of this verse (A. M. Silbermann, Chumash with Targum Onkelos, Haphtaroth and Rashi's Commentary, vol. 4: Bamidbar [Jerusalem: Silbermann, 1934], 62). It is possible to see two questions reflected in this verse. But in support of one question is the point that the first pair of words, "strong or weak," is further explained by the following pair of words, "few or many." The word "strong" can have a variety of nuances. It can result from iron chariots (Josh. 17:18), numbers (Judg. 18:26), or the Lord Himself (Deut. 34:12). Moses was interested in the strength of numbers here. The chiastic arrangement of the adjectives adds support to this view.


19 Rashi understands this use of בָּרוּץ ("good") to be associated with hydrology (Silbermann, Chumash with Targum Onkelos, 4:62). Ibn Ezra understands it as a reference to climate (Jacob Milgrom, Numbers, JPS Torah Commentary [New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1990],102).

20 Charles A. Briggs understands this use of בָּרוּץ as a reference to fertility (The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon [LaFayette, IN: Associated Publishers and Authors, 1980], #2296, 3b).
hydrology that was nearly as austere as the wilderness of their wanderings. The region is generally an "environment adverse to human activity or extensive settlement." Rainfall provides the only water, and it is scant (eight to twelve inches each year). This allows for a barley harvest only once every three or four years.

By contrast, the climate and hydrology of the hill country was much more favorable. "The relative abundance of rain and scores of springs in the highlands of Judah immeasurably outweigh the miserly showers and mean handful of springs in the Negeb." The central mountain range receives between twenty and forty inches of rainfall annually. Further the geologic makeup of that region allows for the preservation of water in numerous springs. Given their experience in the Wilderness of Zin, one would expect the spies to report favorably with regard to the water resources.

A third question Moses asked pertained to urban construction: "Do the inhabitants live in open camps or in fortified cities?" (v. 19, author's paraphrase). Another look at the archaeological record shapes the answer the reader expects the spies to give. Bright observes that the hill country was a "patchwork of petty states, none of any great size." Mazar adds that the most amazing archaeological feature of the hill country during this period is "the almost total lack of fortifications." The strongholds that existed were Egyptian military and administrative ones "along the northern Sinai, the northern Negev, the coastal plain and the Beth-Shan Valley." Thus one would expect the spies to report that, in general, the indigenous population lived in vulnerable, open settlements.

The agricultural quality of the region was the subject of Moses' fourth question (v. 20). The soil of the Negeb is a fine, wind-blown soil called loess soil. "When it rains, the surface of the loess soil becomes relatively impermeable, so that instead of seeping into the

25 Ibid., 19.
27 Mazar, Archaeology and the Land of the Bible, 243. This was true at Hebron where a Middle Bronze II fortified city was not in use in Late Bronze or during Iron (Avi Ofer, "Hebron," in The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Investigation, 2:608-9).
28 Ibid., 283.
ground much of the water rapidly runs off into the wadis, creating miniature badlands' formations.\textsuperscript{30} The hydrology and geology create a poor agricultural environment.

But as the spies moved farther north, they saw more green. As nineteenth-century explorer Edward Robinson moved north of Beersheba, he wrote, "The hills, we could see, began to 'be covered with shrubs; and these increased as we advanced and were intermingled with evergreens and prickly oaks, arbutus and other dwarf trees and bushes."\textsuperscript{31} During the Canaanite Period, the hill country was covered with considerable forests.\textsuperscript{32} But under those forests lay an increasing bed of rich, red, moisture-absorbing soil.\textsuperscript{33} The hill country had potential for agricultural development.

Aware of the search area, the search season, and the search parameters, the reader begins to expect that Moses' questions will be answered in a certain way. The reader does not expect the spies to convey much enthusiasm about the Negeb, but one does expect them to celebrate what they observed in the hill country. The spies are expected to speak about a sparsely populated land, a land with water resources, unfortified settlements, and rich agricultural potential. In short, one expects the spies to return and to say that Israel could easily conquer the land.

THE SEARCH REPORT

After forty days the spies returned and offered their report. Just as Moses had carefully used geography to frame the nature of the search, so the spies carefully misused geography to erode the people's enthusiasm. Their less-than-objective report was simply, "We can't do it!" They led the Israelites to this conclusion through careful naming of the land, through their answers to Moses' questions, and through unsolicited information they added to their report.

NAMING THE LAND

The sensitive reader will note that the spies referred to the land with standard language that is carefully chosen and strategically

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{31} Robinson, "Biblical Researches in Palestine and the Adjacent Regions 1838 and 1852," 1:212.
\textsuperscript{32} Aharoni, The Land of the Bible, 27. The significant deforestation and accompanying erosion of the hill country did not occur until after it had been cleared for agriculture by the influx of Israelites (Arie Issar, Water Shall Flow from the Rock; Hydrology and Climate in the Lands of the Bible [New York: Springer, 1990], 132).
\textsuperscript{33} Beitzel, The Moody Bible Atlas, 44.
altered for rhetorical impact.

From the beginning the reader is expecting to hear a positive report. After all, the spies had gone to the Promised Land. Within the Pentateuch the words "land of Canaan" are employed thirty-three times before this chapter. This expression is securely attached to God's promise to the patriarchs and is typically used with the expression "which the Lord has promised to give you." This is the land to which the Lord had sent them. But when the spies spoke of this very special land, they made a subtle but significant shift in the language they used. It was no longer the land to which the Lord sent them; it was "the land to which you sent us" (v. 27).

The spies also referred to the land as "a land flowing with milk and honey" (v. 27). This expression is used fifteen times in the Pentateuch. It is language by which God Himself described this land (Exod. 3:8, 17). In almost every case it is associated with God's promise to give Israel the land. This reuse of language would have motivated the people in a positive way. But the spies again made a strategic shift that diminished the impact of this phrase. Within the space of five verses, the land that "flows" with milk and honey became the land that "devours" its inhabitants (v. 32).

A further note of discord was struck as the spies described the breadth of their search. Moses had asked for a report on the Negeb and the hill country. But they spoke about the Negeb, the hill country, the coastal plain, and the Jordan Valley. Thus the spies reported on places Moses had not asked about, places that would have a significant impact on the answers to Moses' questions.

Conspicuous by its absence is mention of the spies' stop in the city of Hebron. Hebron was closely associated with the patriarchs and the promise of the land that was given to them (Gen. 13:18; 23:2, 9; 35:27). But the spies made no mention of it, though it was the burial place of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. "They averted their glance from the tombs of the fathers, and they neglected the promise of God." The spies repeatedly took language that had the


\[35\] Based on the paralleling of the feminine singular participles הָלַךְ and מָלֵלָה, Philip J. Budd understands "devours" as a reference to the land's infertility (*Numbers*, Word Biblical Commentary [Waco, TX: Word, 1984], 145).

\[36\] The last two collocations are unique in the Hebrew Bible but are clearly a reference to the topographical zones west of the Jordan River. Beitzel identifies these as the coastal plain, the central mountain spine, and the Jordan rift valley (Beitzel, *The Moody Bible Atlas*, 27). Aharoni views the last reference as the northern Jordan Valley (Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible*, 68).

\[37\] Allen, "Numbers," 2:810.
power to excite enthusiasm and turned it into language that generated doubt.

ANSWERS TO MOSES' FOUR QUESTIONS

In their report the spies answered each of Moses' four questions in some fashion. But the order in which they gave their answers differs from the order in which Moses asked the questions. Since the most logical way in which to present their report would have been to follow the order of Moses' questions, the reordering of information raises questions. Moses asked about the population density, hydrology, urbanization, and agricultural quality. But the spies' answers were in this order: hydrology, agricultural potential, urbanization, and population density.

The ten spies first answered Moses' question about hydrology (Num. 13:27). Here the spies resorted to abbreviated language that speaks of the land's rainfall dependence. They simply agreed that it is a land that "flows with milk and honey." The brevity of their answer neglects the water resources in the hill country.

Then the spies answered Moses' question about the agricultural potential of the land by showing the large cluster of grapes they gathered from the Wadi Eshcol: "This is its fruit" (v. 27). It had been a long time since the Israelites had seen fresh fruit. This would have been a great incentive to enter the land. But the spies did not speak at any length about the cluster of grapes or the pomegranates and figs that they had found. Instead, they proceeded to answer Moses' questions about urbanization and population density. Rashi presumes that the spies used the large cluster of grapes to support their argument that the land was heavily fortified and highly populated.\(^{38}\)

In answering Moses' question about the extent of urbanization, the spies reported that they encountered cities that were "fortified and very large" (v. 28). As noted earlier, the archaeological record of the hill country at that time indicates only small settlements with almost total lack of fortification. In essence they were saying they believed the Israelites could not conquer the land.

In answering Moses' questions about the population, the spies reported, "Amalek is living in the land of the Negev, and the Hit- tites and the Jebusites and the Amorites are living in the hill country, and the Canaanites are living by the sea and by the side of the Jordan" (v. 29). Thus the sparsely populated hill country was a place, the spies were suggesting, where there was no room to re-

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\(^{38}\) Rashi criticizes the selection of "large fruit" as part of the spies' strategy to discourage the people (Silbermann, Numbers, Chumash with Rashi's Commentary, 64).
ceive newcomers. In their report the spies deceitfully distorted what they saw. Their answers were designed to lead Israel to only one conclusion: "We can't possibly possess the land!"

A STRATEGIC ADDITION

The spies made a strategic addition to the report. The most frequently mentioned item in their report was the physical size of the indigenous people. This is noteworthy because Moses had not asked about the people's physical size. Interspersed among the answers to Moses' other questions is a recurring reference to the "strength" of the people who lived in the land they explored.

The spies said the people were "strong" (اذ, v. 28). Moses had not used that word in his questions. He did ask, however, if the people were [پژ]. The spies affirmed that the people were "too strong [پژ] for us" (v. 31). The spies also said that "the descendants of Anak" were living in the land (v. 28). Later the spies spoke about "men of great size" (v. 32). And they added, "There also we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak are part of the Nephilim); 

and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight" (v. 33). This unsolicited information, which built throughout the report, led to the conclusion of the majority of the spies, "We are not able to go up against the people" (v. 31).

CONCLUSION

The use, reuse, and nuancing of geographical references generates expectations about the spies' report, influences the tension of the plot, and molds the reader's view of the spies. These men who at the beginning of the chapter were seen as honorable leaders became untrustworthy manipulators of the truth. They played with the name of the land, simply calling it "the land where you sent us." They fabricated evidence when answering Moses' questions. And they added uninvited, incendiary information to the report. The geography indicates that their report is not what the reader expects it to be. They convinced the Israelites that taking the land was impossible (14:1-4). Ironically the very people who, along with the ten spies, thought they could not enter the Promised Land and conquer it, did not enter it. They died in the wilderness (vv. 22-23, 29, 32-37) because of their lack of confidence in the Lord.

39 This was a class of very tall men, legendary in size, whose memory lingered long in the minds of the Hebrews (George Buchanan Gray, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Numbers, International Critical Commentary [Edinburgh: Clark, 1903], 141).
Psalm 67: Blessing, Harvest and History
A Proposal for Exegetical Methodology

Eep Talstra and Carl J. Bosma

In the Old Testament documents there are a number of references or allusions to the Aaronic blessing in Numbers 6:24-26. One can therefore conclude that the priestly blessing plays a significant role in Old Testament literature generally. However, echoes of this blessing are especially frequent in the book of Psalms.\(^2\)

The obvious cross-references to Numbers 6:24-26 in the Psalter confirm the cultic setting of the words of the blessing as is clear from the formulation of the priestly task in Numbers 6. However, one should note an important difference between psalms that allude to Numbers 6:24-26 and the text of Numbers 6:24-26 itself. Numbers 6:22-27 clearly distinguishes between the words to be spoken by the priests (Num. 6:24-26) and the act of blessing itself, which is to be performed by Yahweh. Shortly after the blessing formula is given, the text adds in verse 27:\(^3\)

> "Thus they [i.e. the priests] will put my Name on the sons of Israel, but I am the one who will bless them."

But the same clear distinction of responsibilities cannot be found in echoing the language of the Psalms. That fact may make the reader cautious. With every psalmic text that refers to Numbers 6:24-26, one faces the question of how the echoes of the priestly benediction are to be understood. Are they to be taken as a wish, a confident statement of fact (either past or present), a prayer, an intention, an obligation--which?

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\(^1\) The authors thank Professor Emeritus John H. Stek for reading the manuscript and for helping with matters of English style.

\(^2\) For the request for and promise of a divine blessing see: Pss 3:8[9]; 5:12[13]; 28:9; 29:11; 109:28; 115:12-13, 15; 128:5 (יהוה יָ֫בּרֵךְ שֵׁם לְבִנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל); 129:8; 134:3 (יהוה יָ֫בּרֵךְ שֵׁם לְבִנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל); etc. For the request for and promise of divine protection see: Pss 12:7[8]; 16:1; 17:8; 25:20; 34:22; 37:28; 41:3; 86:3; 97:10; 116:6; 121:3, 5, 7 (יהוה יָ֫בּרֵךְ) and 8; 141:5; 145:20 and 146:9. For the manifestation of the Lord's radiant countenance see: Pss 4:6[7]; 31:16[17]; 67:1[2]; 80:3[4], 7[8], 19[20]; 119:135; etc. For the request for grace and favor see: Pss 4:1[2]; 6:2[3]; 25:16; 31:9[10][10]; 41:4[5],10[11]; 51:1[3]; 56:1[2]; 57:1[2]; 86:3; 119:58. For peace (שלום) see: Pss 125:5 and 128:6.

All these options are reflected in the treatment of Psalm 67 in commentaries and translations. This psalm contains the strongest parallels to the sacerdotal benediction in the Psalter. Verse 2 uses three (out of six) key verbs from Numbers 6:24-26, but, as the following synoptic comparison shows, presents them in a slightly different order:

Psalm 67:2

אֲלִירָמָה תִּקְנֵנִי
ירַבָּכֵנוּ

God, may he be gracious to us and bless us; may he make his face shine towards us.

Numbers 6:24-25

רְבִּיא חָיָה 24a

אָרַיִנֵהּ פְנֵינוּ אֲלָלָה 25a

May Yahweh bless you. . . May Yahweh cause his face to shine to you and may he be gracious to you.

Moreover, verses 7b-8a also repeat the key verb יְרַבְּכֵנִי from verse 2b, but, as will be demonstrated, interpreters and translators do not agree about the translation of this yiqtol (=imperfect) verb. The setting reflected in Psalm 67 may indeed be the temple cult, but, unlike the blessing proper in Numbers 6:24-26, the words of blessing in verses 2, 7b-8a are not on the lips of the priest(s) pronouncing blessing on the people. Instead, the speaker is identified with the recipients of the blessing and prays on their behalf: "May God bless us." Moreover, the context refers to "all the nations" (v. 3b) and "all the peoples" (vv. 4b, 6b) and speaks of the land and its harvest (v. 7a).

From the exegetical literature on Psalm 67, one can readily discern two interrelated basic questions that a translator and exegete face here: First, in what mood are the pertinent clauses of this psalm speaking? Second, how does one combine the different expressions: Is it a prayer for a blessing for Israel, etc.


an open invitation to the nations to join the songs of praise, or a communal hymn of thanksgiving for the blessing of a good harvest? A survey of modern translations shows great variation in the answers given.

To address these basic issues, we will first present the Hebrew text of the psalm with a translation and grammatical observations. Then we will review representative translations of vv. 2, 7, and 8. These translations will be the starting point for further linguistic and exegetical analysis, undertaken to find interpretive controls in the text itself. Thereafter, related exegetical and theological matters will come under consideration.

1. Hebrew Text and Translations

1.1. Hebrew Text of Psalm 67, Translation, and Grammatical Observations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clause Type</th>
<th>&quot;Actors&quot;</th>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nonverbal</td>
<td></td>
<td>To the choir leader. With strings.</td>
<td>Ps 67:1a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A Psalm. A hymn.</td>
<td>Ps 67:1b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 sg. masc. + 1 pl. suf.</td>
<td>X-yiqtol</td>
<td>God, may he show mercy to us,</td>
<td>Ps 67:2a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>we-yiqtol</td>
<td>and may he bless us.</td>
<td>Ps 67:2b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>O-yiqtol</td>
<td>May he make his face shine upon us</td>
<td>Ps 67:2c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(&quot;Sela&quot;)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


9 For the abbreviations of the various clause types consult the following key:

- X-yiqtol: Subject-yiqtol
- W-X-yiqtol: 1-subject-yiqtol
- O-yiqtol: yiqtol on front position
- Cj.-yiqtol: any conjunction -yiqtol
- X-Qatal: Subject -qatal
3 plur. + 2 sg. masc. suf.

\[\text{ל + inf cstr} \mid \text{so that your way is known on earth,} \]
\[\text{elliptic} \mid \text{(your salvation among all the nations.} \]

3 plur. + 2 sg. masc. suf.

\[O-yiqtol \text{ Let the peoples praise you, God!} \]
\[O-yiqtol \text{ Let all the peoples praise you!} \]

Our main reason for undertaking a close analysis of Psalm 67 springs from the interrelatedness of the linguistic and theological questions that bear on the translation of its last two verses. As will be demonstrated, the existing translations of Psalm 67:2, 7, and 8 show that remarkably different choices have been made in the rendering of the verbal forms of the Hebrew text. Three different verbal forms are at issue: the qatal (perfect) verb נָתַן ("it has given ") in verse 7a; the clause initial yiqtol (imperfect; modal) verbs יָרֵא ("may he make shine ") in verse 2c and יִרְכְּבָּנָה ("may he bless us") in verses 7b and 8a; and the w*yiqtol (modal) verbs יִרְכְּבָּנָה ("and may he bless us") in verse 2a and יִרְכְּבָּנָה ("and may they fear") in verse 8b.
1.2. Survey of Representative Translations of Psalm 67:2, 7, and 8

Both newer and older translations exhibit great variation in which they render these forms. Except for Hermann Gunkel, Diethelm Michel, Walter Beyerlin, Bernardus Dirk Eerdmans and Elmer A Leslie, all translations presented below render the verbs of verse 2 with some kind of modality. However, their treatment of the *yiqtol* verbs in verses 7b and 8 differ greatly. Apparently, most translators feel no need to translate the clause initial *yiqtol* verb יִתְנַחֶם in verses 7b and 8a in the same manner as the clause initial shortened *yiqtol* verb יִתְנַחֶם in verse 2c.

Some translations of verses 2 (**yiqtol**), 7 (**X-qatal; yiqtol**) and 8 (**yiqtol**):

**Commentaries:**

[1] Wilhelm Martin Leberecht de Wette

2: Gott sei uns gnadig, und segn' uns,  
   Er lasse sein Angesicht gegen uns leuchten.  
   . . .

7: Die Erde gibt ihren Ertrag; Uns segnet Gott, unser Gott.  
   present - present

8: Uns segnet Gott. Und ihn furchten alle Enden der Erde.  
   present - present


2: Elohim sei uns hold und segne uns,  
   Er lasse leuchten sein Antlitz bei uns--. . .

7: Der Erde hat gegeben ihre Frucht--Segnen wird uns Elohim user Gott  
   perfect - future

8: Segnen wild uns Elohim, und furchten werden ihn alle Enden der Erde.  
   future - future

2: Jahve war uns gnadig und segnete uns,
lieB leuchten sein Antlitz bei uns.
7: das Land gab seinen Ertrag, uns segnete 'Jahve,' unser Gott.
8: 'Jahve' segnete uns; so sollen ihn ehren alle Enden
der Erde! past - past

2: Elohim is merciful unto us and blesseth us
and causeth his face to shine with us.
7: The earth has yielded her increase, Elohim our God
blesseth us. past - present
8: Elohim blesseth us, so all the ends of the earth
fear him. present -modal (result)

2: God has been gracious to us and blessed us,
and caused His face to shine upon us.
7: The earth has yielded its produce: God, our God,
has blessed us; past - past
8: God blesses us, and all the ends of the earth shall
fear Him. present -modal (obligation)

2: May God be gracious and bless us
and make his face to shine upon us.
7: The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God,
blesses us. perfect -present
8: May God bless us! Let all the ends of the earth
fear him! modal- modal (wish)

Gunkel, Die Psalmen, 280.

Gunkel, Die Psalmen, 281, emends the yiqtol verb הָנַעַן to a qatol נהון, and the
following wayyiqtol verb כְּרַבָּנוּ to a wayyiqtol כְּרַבַּנְנוּ. For a similar position see: Taylor, “The

Gunkel, Die Psalmen, 281, argues that the meaning of the yiqtol verbs כְּרַבָּנוּ in vv.
7b-8a is determined by the qatol verb נהון in v. 7a. In his judgment, these yiqtol verbs may be
read as poetic aorists or emended to read כְּרַבֵּנוּ (cf. KeBlcr).


Leslie, The Psalms, 111-12.

Weiser, The Psalms, 472.
2:  'Jahwe' sei uns gnadig und segne uns,  
er lasse sein Antlitz leuchten bei uns. . .

7:  Das Land gab seinen Ertrag. Es segnete uns 'Jahwe,'  
    unser Gott!  past -past

8:  Es segnete uns 'Jahwe';  past
    und es sollen ihn fürchten alle Enden der Erde!  modal (obligation)

[8] Hans-Joachim Kraus (German Fifth Edition; English translation)
2:  May 'Yahweh' be gracious to us and bless us,  modal- modal
    may he let his countenance shine among us. . .

7:  May the land yield its increase! May 'Yahweh,' our God,  
    bless us!  modal - modal

8:  May 'Yahweh' bless us; Let all the ends of the earth  
    fear him!  modal - modal

[9] Jan Ridderbos
2:  God zij ons genadig en zegene ons,  modal - modal
    Hij doe zijn aanschijn bij ons lichten. . .

7:  Het land zal zijn opbrengst geven,  perfect of confidence
    God, onze God, zal ons zegenen,  future

8:  God zal ons zegenen, en alle einden der aarde  
    zullen Hem vrezen!  future - future(?)

[10] N. A. van Uchelen
2:  God zij ons genadig en zegene ons,  modal - modal

7:  het land geeft zijn opbrengst, God, onze God,  
    zegent ons.  present - present

8:  God zegen ons, opdat de einden der aarde  
    Hem vrezen.  modal (wish)

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24 Hans-Joachim Kraus, Psalmen, L Teilband, BKAT, XV/I (Neukirchen: 
Neukirchener Verlag, 1960), 461.  
Oswald (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 39.  
26 Beyerlin, Im Licht der Traditionen, 10, n 29, critiques Kraus' failure to justify 
grammatically the jussive reading of v. 7a.  
27 J. Ridderbos, De Psalmen, 2: 177.  
28 N.A. van Uchelen, Psalmen, deel II, POT (Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1977), 182.
PSALM 67: BLESSING, HARVEST, AND HISTORY


2: God zij ons barmhartigen zegene ons,
   Hij late zijn Aangezicht over ons lichten... past -past

7: Het land heeft zijn oogst gegeven: God, onze God,
   schonk ons zegen
   modal - modal (wish)

8: God zegene ons; 0 mogen alle einden der aarde
   Hem vrezen!
past -past

[12] Walter Beyerlin

2: Jahwe segnet uns gnadiglich,
   ist uns wohlgesinnt, was unsere Pflugscharen betrifft... past -past

7: Das Land hat seinen Ertrag gegeben.
   Es segnet uns Jahwe, unser Gott.
   perfect

8: Es segnet uns Jahwe.
   Also mussen ihn furchten alle Enden der Erde.
   present
   modal (obligation)

[13] Diethelm Michel

2: Gott ist uns gnadig und segnet uns;
   er laBt sein Angesicht bei uns leuchten... perfect
   present

7: Das Land hat seinen Ertrag gegeben,
   es segnet uns Gott, unser Gott.
   perfect

8: Es segnet uns Gott,
   furchten mussen ihn alle Enden der Erde.
   present
   modal (obligation)


2: May God have pity on us and bless us;
   may he cause his face to shine
   may he come to us.

7: May the earth yield her produce, may God, our
   God, bless us.
   precative perfect -modal

8: May God bless us, all the ends of the earth revere him.
   modal (wish)

29 van der Ploeg, Psalmen, 1:385.
30 Beyerlin, Im Licht der Traditionen, 40.
[15] Marvin E. Tate
2:  May God be gracious and bless us; 
may he make his face to shine among us. . .

7:  The earth yields its harvest!  
Continue to bless us, a God, our God.  

8:  May God bless us-And all the ends of the earth 
will fear him!

Bible Translations
[16] RSV
2:  May God be gracious to us 
and make his face to shine upon us. . .

7:  The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God 
has blessed us.

8:  God has blessed us; let all the ends of the 
earth fear him!

[17] NEB
2:  God be gracious to us and bless us, 
God make his face shine upon us. . .

7:  The earth has given its increase and God, our God, 
will bless us.

8:  God grant us his blessing that all the ends of the 
earth may fear him.

[18] REB
2:  God be gracious to us and bless us, 
God make his face shine upon us. . .

7:  The earth has yielded its harvest. May God, our 
God, bless us,

8:  God grant us his blessing that all the ends of the 
earth may fear him.

[19] NIV (cf., KJV)
2:  May God be gracious to us and bless us 
and make his face shine upon us. . .

7:  Then the land will yield its harvest, and God, our God 
will bless us,

8:  God will bless us, and all the ends of the earth will 
fear him.

34 Tate, Psalms 51-100, 153.
PSALM 67: BLESSING, HARVEST, AND HISTORY

[20] NRSV (cf., NJB)
2: May God be gracious to us and bless us
   and make his face to shine upon us...
   .
7: The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God has
   blessed us;       perfect -perfect
8: May God continue to bless us; let all the ends of the
   earth revere him.    modal - modal (wish)

[21] NAB
2: May God be gracious to us and bless us;
   may God's face shine upon us...
   .
7: The earth has yielded its harvest; God, our God,
   blesses us.      past -present
8: May God bless us still; modal (wish)
   that the ends of the earth may revere our God.    modal (purpose)

[22] NBG
2: God zij ons genadig en zegene ons,
   Hij doe zijn aanschijn bij ons lichten. .
   .
7: De aarde gat haar gewas, God, onze God
   zegent ons;      past - present
8: God zegent ons opdat alle einden der aarde
   Hem vrezen.    present -modal (purpose)

[23] KBS 1975
2: God zij ons genadig, Hij zegene ons, .
   .
7: De aarde gaf haar gewas: God onze God wil
   ons zegenen.  past - modal (wish)
8: Hij wil ons zegenen, God. .    modal (intention)

2: Wees ons genadig, schenk ons uw zegen, God, .
   .
7: De aarde brengt haar vruchten op; God, onze
   God zegent ons.  present - present
8: God regent ons; .    present

This variety of translations is an invitation to reconsider some closely inter-
related questions in the reading of this psalm:

The linguistic question: Is Hebrew syntax really so free that almost
"anything goes"? That may be more or less the traditional point of view, but if that
is the case, it poses a real problem for translators. On what can or should
translators base a choice?
**The literary question:** Is the interpretation and the translation of the psalm a matter of literary genre or of grammar and linguistics? Those who view the psalm as a hymn of praise or as a song of thanksgiving for a harvest tend to slight grammar and translate the clauses that speak of blessing (w. 2, 7b-8b) in the past or perfect tenses. This dominant form-critical approach, however, poses a problem for linguists.

**The theological question:** Is the translation to be decided on the basis of the theological point of view the translator has adopted relative to the psalm? One may, for example, hold the view that according to the text of this psalm the blessing of the land yielding its harvest can in and by itself be enjoyed by people--whomever and whenever. Or one can hold the view that the blessing of God here in focus is connected with Israel's position in the world among other nations, her unique relationship with God, and therefore cannot be rightly, understood apart from Israel's history--apart from Torah and prophecy, exile and return. This approach poses a problem for the exegete since the psalm seems to explain God's blessing by two very different themes ('you [God] judge the peoples with equity," v. 5c, and "the land has yielded its harvest," v. 7a) and the connection between these two is left unclarified.

It is interesting to note that already in much earlier exegetical work, for instance in de Wette's commentary, this difference of opinion existed. According to de Wette, Psalm 67 is a general hymn that praises God and asks for his blessing. Therefore, in his comment on the verb הָנַת in verse 7a he adopts a present translation, "gives," and rejects J. Hitzig's past translation, "gave," on the grounds that a past translation would make the psalm a song of thanksgiving for the harvest:

7. Gives] Hitzig: gave, as if the Psalm were a harvest song (cf., Ps. 65, 10).

For the purpose of this article, it is important to underscore that the only warrant that de Wette's comment offers for the rejection of Hitzig's translation is the observation concerning the psalm's genre: It is not a song of thanksgiving for a harvest. He presents no discussion of the verbal forms as such. However, why would a translation of the qatol verb הָנַת in the past tense automatically turn the psalm into a Thanksgiving song for a harvest?

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35 de Wette, *Commentar uber die Psalmen*. In the introduction to his commentary de Wette mentions Ps. 67 with other hymns (p. 3): "Hymnen, in welchen Jehovah gepriesen wird, . . . 3) als VolksGott,Ps. 47. 66. 67. 75" ("Hymns, in which Jehovah is praised, . . . 3) as the God of the nations, Ps.. 47; 66; 67; 75"). In his exposition of Ps. 67 (p. 355), he writes: "Ein Hymnus auf Jehovah, ohne besondere Veranlassung, warscheinlich für den Tempel bestimmt. Bitte um Gnade für das Yolk Israel, damit die fremden Nationen Jehovah erkennen (Vs. 2.3)" ("A hymn to Jehovah, without a specific occasion, that was apparently designed for the temple. A prayer for grace on behalf of the people Israel, so that the foreign nations recognize Jehovah").


37 de Wette, *Commentar uber die Psalmen*, 356.
In any case, de Wette’s negative evaluation of Hitzig’s past translation of the qatol verb נַעֲשָׂה clearly demonstrates that the first person to face the difficulties of grammar and theology in Psalm 67 is the translator. Any translator who chooses one of the renderings presented above (§ 1:2)—of which, with the exception of the REB (# 18), in our opinion, have difficulties in handling consistently the syntax of mood and tenses—runs the risk of determining the theological understanding of the psalm before his readers have even a chance to formulate it themselves.

In the textual analysis that follows, we will search for linguistic arguments that support the translation already proposed above (§ 1.1). This linguistic data will also be helpful for exegetical analysis of the text in general. In section three, we will return to the issue concerning the relationship of blessing, harvest, and history.

2. Textual Analysis

For the linguistic and the exegetical analysis of Psalm 67, it is important to give close attention to its syntax, its literary form, and the actors involved. Of special interest is the use made of verbal forms and the clause type of verse 7a.

2.1. Linguistic Data
2.1.1. Compositional Structure

In his form-critical analysis of Psalm 67, Hermann Gunkel suggested that the text of the psalm is incomplete. He felt that the refrain of verses 4 and 6 should be added again at the end.39

Older and more recent rhetorical analysis, however, has observed the concentric structure of verses 4 through 6, with verses 4 and 6 framing verse 5.40 In

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38 Ibid. "7. Gibt] Hitzig: gab, als ware der Ps. ein Emtelied (cf., Ps. 65, 10)."
identical words, verses 4 and 6 repeat the wish that God's praise extend to the peoples. The reason why is given in verse 5, the pivotal verse of the psalm: The nations should praise and shout for joy because God judges them with equity and leads them. The concentric structure in the psalm can be elaborated further. The echoes of the priestly blessing are restricted to the beginning of the psalm (v. 2) and its end (v. 7b-8a). So these verses, in turn, frame the central block of verses 4 through 6 to form the following concentric structure that focuses attention on verse 5 as the centerpiece of the psalm:

2a God, may he show mercy to us,
b and may he bless us.
A  c May he make his face shine upon us
3a | (so that your way is known on earth (ה’ א),
b your salvation among all the nations (ה’ לה).)
B  4a Let the peoples (עם העמים) praise you, God!
b Let all the peoples (עם העמים) praise you!
5a Let them rejoice
C  b and shout (for joy), the nations (לעמים)
c (because you judge the peoples (עם העמים) with equity
 d and lead the nations (לעם העמים) on the earth (ה’ א).
B'  6a. Let the peoples (עם העמים) praise you, God!
b Let all the peoples (עם העמים) praise you!
7a The land (״ארץ״) having yielded its harvest,
A'  b may God, our God, bless us.
c May God bless us
 d so that all the ends of the earth (״ארץ״) may revere him.

It is important to observe that within this rhetorical architecture of the psalm a number of shifts occur. In verses 2 and 7 through 8 the same set of actors is present. The participants are "He" (God) and "us." In verses 3 to 6, the idiom and the set of actors is different: "You" (God) and "they" (the nations). This change in idiom and in the set of actors makes a comparison with the text of the Aaronic benediction of particular interest. As here, so in Numbers 6:24-26, the blessing is located in a context of two main actors. In Numbers 6:24-26, the actors are "Yahweh" and "you" (singular!), the individual members of the community of Israel. In Psalm 67, however, the two main actors are identified as "God" /"He" and "us" (verses 2, 7b-8). Moreover, it is important to note astrik-
ing double shift in actors in verses 3 to 6: from "God"/"He" to "you" ("God") and from "us" (Israel) to "they" (the nations). This arresting shift means that the dialogue of Israel and God is continued by the direct address "you," while at the same time the role of the other actors on stage, the nations, is emphasized. The nations should see the blessing, understand, rejoice, and revere.

With references to "the earth," "the nations," "the peoples," and "all the ends of the earth" in verses 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8b, the stage has been greatly enlarged.

Thus while the echo of the priestly blessing in verse 2 may suggest a liturgical setting, the psalm neither mentions the priest, whose role it was to pronounce the blessing, nor the Name to be laid on the children of Israel, as Numbers 6:27 prescribes. Clearly, the scene is much broader than the liturgical moment of the priestly blessing. The psalm can better be regarded as a song of the community in response to a particular blessing experienced in history.

In view of the above observations, the importance of verse 8 becomes known. Already in verse 7b the psalm returns to the first set of actors: May "He" bless "us." However, in verse 8 one finds the combination of all the actors on stage: "May God bless us, that all the ends of the earth (they) may fear Him!"

Thus while the rhetorical composition of the psalm may indeed have a concentric structure, the shift in the set of actors means that the concluding verses of the psalm (vv. 7b-8) do not merely repeat its opening lines (vv. 2-3). Rather, it ends by integrating the roles of all the actors.

That still leaves one special clause, namely, verse 7a: 'The land has yielded its harvest." What is the meaning of this clause in this context? To whom is this message directed? The qatol form of the verb הָנָתַן is of particular interest and could contain the clue to the psalm's interpretation. How is it to be understood? Is it to be read as referring to the past (Gunkel: expressive of thanksgiving), to the present (de Wette: expressive of present experience of blessing), to a wish (NEB: expressive of a prayer for blessing), or to a certain future as the NIV suggests? Before we can address that question, we need to examine the syntax of the text as a whole.

2.1.2. Clause Types and Verbal Forms

The text of Psalm 67 is dominated by the use of yiqtol and w*yiqtol verbal forms (fourteen clauses out of nineteen--leaving aside two cases of הָלַע) a majority of them (eleven) occupying the initial position in their clauses. A special difficulty with the translation of yiqtol verbal forms is the fact that one does not always find sufficient morphological clues to decide in a particular text whether these are indicative or modal verbs. With first-person verbs, one may find the form extended by a ה-ו, the so-called cohortative. With other verbal lexemes, one may meet the shortened form of the second- or third-person yiqtol the so-called jussive (as in יָנֶפּ לְא; v. 2c). However, in the case of the usual yiqtol verbal form, such as רָבַשְׁנָם (v. 5b) and רָבַשִּׁנֶנָּה (vv. 7b, 8a), modality is not morphologically marked.
Alviero Niccacci has suggested that one should search for syntactical marker of modality in addition to the morphological ones.\(^{43}\) In our judgment, two of the syntactical markers of a modal *yiqtol* verb that he proposes apply to the text of Psalm 67-first, when the third-person *yiqtol* form occupies the initial position in a clause (e.g. בָּנָה v. 4 and 6), and second, when the *yiqtol* is continued by a *w* *yiqtol* (as in vv. 2b, 5b and 8b). We are aware that with poetry one has to be careful, since syntax may be overruled by a particular rhetorical design, such as fronting or chiasm. We believe, however, that the syntactical markers Niccacci has identified are valid for the interpretation of Psalm 67.

We have already pointed out that most translations quoted above (§ 1.2) accept modality in their reading of verse 2. The problems are with verses 7b and 8a, where, in spite of the fact that the same *yiqtol* verbal form לֹא בְּרֵאָה occupies the initial position in each clause, translations differ widely. The identical verb is rendered "has blessed," "did bless," "may X bless," "blesses," and "will bless." This variety in translation leads to the conclusion that the lack of morphological marking has clearly been taken as an opportunity to translate in accord with one’s exegetical preferences. In our view, that is not a valid practice. To warrant this judgment, we will focus the reader’s attention on verse 7a.

Verse 7a is a crucial clause for the translation and interpretation of Psalm 67. Apart from it, one could read this psalm as a prayer for God’s blessing and an invitation to all nations to praise him because of his blessings. However, its presence cannot be ignored—both what it states and its linguistic form is unexpected.

We must first consider the clause type that verse 7a represents. Here the subject (יָרֵא, "earth," "land"), rather than the verb (לְבָנָה, "she gives") is in the clause initial position, and this verb has a *qatol* form in distinction from the vast majority of *yiqtol* and *w* *yiqtol* verbal forms. In fact, it is the only *qatol* verb employed in Psalm 67! Why does this fronting of the subject occur, and why is the *qatol* verbal form used?

Next we need to consider why the subject יָרֵא stands here without the definite article such as is implied in the pointing of this noun in verses 3a (יָרֵא, "on the earth") and 5d (יָרֵא). This fact, together with the combination of "earth" and "harvest" suggest that with the word יָרֵא a new entity is being introduced. Verses 3a and 5d speak of the earth as the habitation of peoples, but in verse 7a, the noun refers to cultivated land, to soil or ground yielding its har-

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vest. So we have the statement about "the land has yielded its harvest" placed between two exclamations, "Let all the peoples praise you!" (v. 6b) and "May God bless us!" (v. 7b).

The translations presented above (§ 1.2) show that usually not much attention is being paid to these important linguistic details. Rather, the translations have been based on general literary or theological considerations:

As was noted above, de Wette's comments on Hitzig's translation of the qatol verb הַנִּחַֽנְּנִי in verse 7a demonstrate that Psalm 67 was already at that time interpreted in terms of a ceremony of thanksgiving on the occasion of the summer harvest. Later Gunkel classified the psalm as a song of thanksgiving for a harvest festival (ErnteDanklied). To support this classification, Gunkel was forced to resort to textual emendation of the yiqtol verbs of verse 2.

A more theological variation to the concept of a grain harvest is the idea that the psalm refers to eschatological times when all peoples will make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for worship—a "harvest" for the God of Israel. Now, although one need not exclude such a reading out of hand as an option in the psalm's later employment, it does not offer much help for linguistic analysis of the text. Translations based on this view also render both the qatol and the yiqtol verbal forms of verse 7 in the present tense, as if there were no difference here both in verbal form and clause type.

2.2. "Beyond Form Criticism": Linguistic Analysis

It is clear that a premature interest in the psalm's literary genre and its location in the history of religion or a premature conclusion as to its theological import do not encourage close attention to language and grammar as the source of basic clues for proper reading. Of course, most exegetes would not deny that methodologically a linguistic analysis of a text should be given priority over theological interest. It is generally acknowledged that analytical examination of the language of a text precedes interpretation. Nevertheless, in practice all interpreters face the difficulty of when and how to combine analysis and interpretation. We do not wish to suggest that we will provide the final answer to this complex issue, but we do want to demonstrate one way to move from linguistic analysis to theological interpretation.

44 In English one cannot avoid introducing the use of the definite article before "land."
45 de Wette, Commentar über die Psalmen, 356.
46 Gunkel, Die Psalmen, 280. For a discussion of Gunkel's position see Kraus, Psalms 60-150, 40.
47 Gunkel, Die Psalmen, 281. For a critique see: Kraus, Psalms 60-150, 40.
48 Suggested, among others, by van Uchelen, Psalmen, 2: 184. Buttenweiser, The Psalms, 787, also reads Ps. 67 as an eschatological hymn.
To that end, we will first search the Old Testament for linguistic parallels to the text of verse 7a, using the Bible software program Quest. Using this computer-search software, we will be concerned to find two types of parallels: (1) texts with the same or similar idiom (analogies of a lexical type); and (2) texts with the same or similar grammatical clause type (analogies of a syntactic type).

2.2.1. Lexical Parallels

To discover lexical parallels to Psalm 67:7a, a "query" was composed that requested verses that have the verb נְתַן, "to give," followed by a maximum of two words, one of which is to be לְפָרָה, "fruit," or לְבוֹר, "produce," "harvest." A reversed order of the elements was also allowed. The result of the search was the following collection of lexical parallels, which, for reasons of space, are listed without their full contexts:

- Then the land will yield its fruit לַחֲמַת הַאֲרָץ לְפָרָה Lev 25:19
- And the land will yield its harvest לַחֲמַת הַאֲרָץ לְבוֹר Lev 26:4
- And your land will not yield its harvest לַחֲמַת הַאֲרָץ לְבוֹר Lev 26:20
- And the soil will not yield its harvest לַחֲמַת הַאֲרָץ נָחָל Dt 11:17
- And the land will yield its harvest בְּלַחֲמַת יָרְשֵׁהּ Ez 34:27
- And the land will yield its harvest לְבָרָה יָרְשֵׁהּ Zech 8:12
- (The) land has yielded its harvest יָרְשֵׁהּ לָבָרָה Ps 67:7
- And our land will yield its harvest לְבָרָה אֱרָץ נָחָל Ps 85:13

The expression לַחֲמַת הַאֲרָץ לְבוֹר in Psalm 67:7a appears to be closely related to two groups of texts. The first of these consists of texts from the Torah: Leviticus 25:19 (which concerns the year of Jubilee) and Leviticus 26:4, 20 and Deuteronomy 11:17 (which concern the blessings and curses of the covenant that are contingent on Israel's obedience or disobedience of Yahweh's commandments). The clustering of the words earth, harvest, and blessing found here is also present in Psalm 67, but the connection with the commandments of the Torah is not. What, then, about the second group of texts, namely, Ezekiel 34:27, Zechariah 8:12, and Psalm 85:12[13], texts in which a successful harvest belongs to traditional prophetic expectations associated with the renewal of Israel's life after their return from exile?

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51 Quest applies a particular type of "queries" that the user can compose with the help of a subroutine. For details see the manual: J. A. Groves, H. J. Bosman, J. H. Harmsen, E. Talstra, User Manual Quest: Electronic Concordance Application for the Hebrew Bible (Haarlem: NBC, 1992), 1-128.
Ezekiel 34:20-31 announces that God will act as a judge and will appoint a new shepherd to Israel, namely, "My servant David" (vv. 23, 24). In this way, God will bring peace and security (vv. 25, 27) to his people. Verse 26 also makes an explicit reference to "blessing." Rains will bring their blessings (v. 26) and, as a result, "the trees of the field will yield their fruit and the land will yield its harvest" (v. 27; cf., Lev. 26:4, 20).

The promise of Ezekiel 34:27 should be compared with Psalm 85:12:

Indeed, Yahweh will bestow what is good, and our land will yield its harvest.

But an even stronger analogy is present in Zechariah 8:9-13.

This portion of Zechariah's prophecy is framed by words of encouragement "Let your hands be strong" (v. 9) and "Do not be afraid, but let your hands be strong" (v. 13). The new generation is summoned to reflect upon earlier prophetic words spoken when the temple was being rebuilt (v. 9). Before that time there were no benefits produced for humans or animals (v. 10). However, now (v. 11) a new time will begin. God will give prosperity. Verse 12 describes the new beginning as follows:

because a seed of peace
the vine will yield its fruit,
the ground will produce its harvest,
and the heavens will drop their dew.

and I will cause the remnant of this

people to possess all these things.

The opening words of this verse ("because a seed of peace") are difficult. A. S. van der Woude transposes the definite article from "her seed." In spite of the difficulties, the general thrust of the clause cannot be missed. It is clear that "the vine will yield its fruit (the ground will yield its harvest (and heavens will give their dew") (v. 12). Then Judah and Israel will become a blessing to the nations (v. 13: -כַּיְלָה ; cf. Hag 1:10; 2:19)-a theme elaborated in verses 20-22.

The analogies with postexilic prophecy in terms of both lexical data and the actors involved suggest another reading of Psalm 67 than that it is just a general liturgical text expressing the community's gratitude for a good harvest. The prophetic words speak of a new beginning. After the return from exile and the

53 A.S. van der Woude, Zachariah, POT (Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1984), 142.
restoration of the temple, a good harvest is a sign of hope, confirming that, indeed, a new time has begun. It may well be, therefore, that we have in Psalm 67 an echo of this prophetic word: "The land has yielded its harvest," now may God bless us (cf. Zech. 8:13), and may it be visible to all the nations. It should be recalled that Leviticus 26:42 also promised that after the devastation and exile God would remember the land.

If the analogy of Psalm 67 to the prophetic word in Zechariah 8:12, based on lexical and syntactical comparison, is accepted as plausible, we must return to the question of how to read the qatol verbal form of Psalm 67:7a and how this reading would influence the analysis of the yiqtol verbal forms in verses 7b and 8a. The question is: Are they to be translated as past, as present, or as jussives in accordance with the same verbal forms in verse 2?

2.2.2. Syntactical Parallels

To propose a solution to this question, it is necessary to find other instances of clauses in the Old Testament that have a syntactical structure similar to Psalm 67:7: a fronted noun followed by a qatol verb in the first clause and a yiqtol verb in the next clause. For that, a computer search was made based on the following query: a noun, a qatol verbal form, a maximum of two words, and a yiqtol verbal form. This search, under the constraint of a noun in the initial position, yielded only a small number of texts: but some were found. Comparing them appears to warrant the conclusion that a qatol→yiqtol sequence constitutes a syntactical pattern to be rendered: "when A has happened, B will or should happen."55

Two examples suffice to illustrate this sequence. The first example is Amos 3:8:

Has a lion roared, \(^a\) qatol
who would not be afraid? \(^b\) yiqtol
Has the Sovereign LORD spoken, \(^c\) qatol
who would not prophesy? \(^d\) yiqtol

The second example is Ezekiel 33:16:

Has he done right and justice; \(^c\) qatol
he shall surely live. \(^d\) yiqtol

If one removes the constraint of the fronted noun, one finds more instances of the qatol→yiqtol type. A few examples are: Psalms 46:7; 56:5; and 77:17.

55 Cf., Delitzsch, Bilingualer Commmtntar uber die Psalmen, 1:461; Weber, "Psalm LXVII,"561. Weber reject Beyerlin's present-tense translation of vv. 2, 7b-8a because it is based on the textual emendation of the yiqtol verb in v. 2c (p. 8) and, in line with the interpretation of the qatol-yiqtol sequence proposed in this article, renders v. 7 as: "Das Land hat seinen Ertrag gegeben-Jahwe, unser Gott, moge uns wiederum/weiterhin segnen" ("The land has yielded its harvest-may Yahweh, our God, bless us once more/again").
The examples found in Amos 3:8 and Ezekiel 33:16 demonstrate the distinct possibility that a *yiqtol* clause following a *qatol* clause can express a modality. That means that also in Psalm 67:7 and 8 it is possible to translate according to the syntactical rule proposed by Niccacci, namely, that a modal use of a clause initial *yiqtol* verb (v. 8a) is corroborated by the *w*yiqtol following it (v. 8b). Therefore, the *yiqtol* verbs in verses 7 and 8 can be translated modally in a way similar to verse 2.

7a The land having yielded its harvest, *perfect*  
   b may God, our God, bless us. *modal*

8a May God bless us *modal*  
   b so that all the ends of the earth may revere him. *modal (purpose)*

The fronting of the indefinite noun *יָד* implies the introduction of a new actor in the text or-in case the actor is known already-an explicit turn to the actor's role. As was noted above (§ 2.1.2), it is "earth" as land that God causes to yield a harvest. This explicit reference is reflected in the proposed translation: "The land having yielded. . . ."

It seems to us that the lexical and the syntactical data can be joined to assist in the interpretation of Psalm 67. A clear analogy to the text of Zechariah 8 is present. The new times, the time of renewal has begun, as is signaled by the fact that a new harvest has been given. May God now continue to bless his people, and may the nations see it and understand what is happening.

We find it of considerable interest that a similar explanation is already mentioned in de Wette's commentary. In his introduction to Psalm 67, de Wette refers to the work of Heinrich Ewald. And Ewald translates verses 7 through 8 with modality:

The earth already gives its fruit: may God, our God, bless us!  
May God bless us, so that all earth's bounds may fear him.

and he comments:

From the close ver. 7 it is further clear that such high wishes were formed precisely in a time when the new settlement was snatched from imminent

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58 de Wette, *Commentar uber die Psalmen*, 335.  
distress by an unexpectedly rich harvest, (therefore plainly enough at the
time of Haggai, see above on Ps. cxxvi) and this first blessing might serve
as pledge for the further greater ones.
As noted earlier, de Wette himself assigns a rather broad cultic function to
Psalm 67, even while mentioning some other views, including that of Ewald. His
comments on Ewald's views are too short, however, to know precisely what he
thinks of them. He writes:
Ewald considers the Psalm to be a pronouncement of the priestly blessing
from the postexilic time of restoration, with a view to the expectations of
the new colony, on the occasion of a plentiful harvest." ^62
As should be clear from the preceding discussion, it is our view that
Ewald's understanding of the text can be supported. We would emphasize,
however, that the focus is not just on a particular harvest in and by itself. The
connection with the prophetic texts makes clear that the important theme is a
harvest experienced as a sign for Israel's new future among the nations.

3. Interpretation: Text, Methodology and Theology
3.1. Linguistic Data
Relating Psalm 67:7 to postexilic prophecies of renewal, especially to the
text of Zechariah 8, helps to find a theological position for the psalm where
"blessing," "harvest" and "history" are connected in a meaningful way. Our pro-
posal is to view the psalm in a theological frame of reference similar to the sit-
uation found in postexilic prophecy. There one finds the same extended set of
actors as in Psalm 67:8 interacting on one stage in relationship to God's bless-
ing, namely, God, Israel, the peoples, the earth, the harvest.
When one takes account of what has been observed concerning the syntacti-
cal and lexical relationships of Psalm 67:7 with the texts of Ezekiel 34:27 and
Zechariah 8:12, the first conclusion to be drawn is methodological. It becomes
apparent that translators and exegetes "do not live by assumptions about literary
genre alone." We emphasize not alone. It is a matter of priority. Analysis of the
linguistic features of a text should be done first--both lexical and grammatical.
If one reads Psalm 67 bringing immediately to bear certain assumptions
about the history of religion and cult, one may end up missing the point of
what the composition as a whole is expressing. Of course, with the linguistic
approach we are arguing for one is making assumptions as well. The basic
assumption is that related texts exhibit related idiom, grammar, and actors.

^62 de Wette, *Commentar über die Psalmen*, 356. "Ewald hält den Ps. für eine Ausführung
des priesterlichen Segensspruchs aus der Zeit der Wiederherstellung nach dem Exil, mit
Rücksicht auf die Hoffnungen der neuen Colonie, auf Anlass einer reichen Ernte (Vs. 7)."
The combination of these elements is important. It is not enough merely to be able to register a number of identical words. In combination, however, these linguistic data provide an effective starting point in textual analysis.

3.2. Discourse and History of Religion

By locating Psalm 67 in a recurring cultic ceremony and explaining it as a song of praise on the occasion of a harvest, one turns the contents of the text into a general one. Then it merely says: God did bless us; may all nations see it and be impressed. From this presupposed cultic setting one proceeds immediately to interpretation. The text's setting is then the interaction of cult and harvest season.

A more formal linguistic and syntactical comparison of Psalm 67 with other texts in the biblical corpus follows a reverse path. First, one undertakes an analysis of the text and a comparison with other texts. That makes it possible to analyze the text as one that participates in a discourse, as a text that takes a stand in a particular theological dialogue. The psalm's text can be analyzed in the theological context of postexilic prophecy in Ezekiel, Haggai, and Zechariah. One can also compare parallels of Psalm 67:5 and 8 with Isaiah 52:10, Psalms 96:13 and Psalm 98:8. Such comparisons produce what one could call a literary-theological setting of the text.

Assigning the text to a particular time and place, if possible at all, is much more a matter of hypothesis. For a complete interpretation, that needs to be tried also, but it is a second step in the exegetical procedure. One could, for example, assume a cultic setting in the second temple where the priestly blessing was pronounced, as is described in the book of Ben Sirah, chapter 50:20-21. The high priest Simon blessed the community using the Name of God in accordance with the text of the priestly blessing. The Septuagint version of Sirah speaks of the Name, but refers to God with the word κυρίον ("Lord"). Simon "gave the blessing of the LORD (δώραι εὐλογίαν κυρίον) using the name of the LORD (ἐπομοτιαὐτοῦ)." Psalm 67 may have been sung at a similar occasion, but, of course, this cannot be more than a hypothesis.

However, the exegetical task should properly begin by locating a text first in the biblical corpus, rather than first in the context of religio-historical assumptions. As we see it, the exegetical procedure chosen determines whether one reads Psalm 67 in terms of a "harvest" as the occasion for an annual harvest festival or a particularly significant "harvest" in Israel's history.

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64 Cf. Seybold, *Der aaronitische Segen*, 15.
3.3. Reading in Canonical Context: Interpretation and Theology

A positioning of the text in terms of theological discourse, rather than an assignment of the text to a cultic setting of ancient religion, will allow modern readers to interact with the text and to address questions of theological importance. The main questions the text of Psalm 67 evokes are about the relationship of Israel and the nations and about the nature of God's blessing. What kind of blessing is expressed by the successful harvest referred to in verse 7a: a blessing in accordance with the creation order or a blessing of historical significance? The empirical referent of the declarative statement in Psalm 67:7a is clear: The land has yielded its harvest. The question is: How does one interpret the meaning of this successful harvest?

In their interpretation, exegetes may decide to concentrate on a blessing of God that is experienced as part of the regular pattern of creation (Gen 1:11; cf. 8:22). That is how Kraus reads Psalm 67 in his commentary. According to him, verses 7 and 8 refer to the experience of the ground yielding its fruits, and this should give reason for a universal recognition of the God of Israel among the nations. Since the setting of this text is a cultic ceremony, Psalm 67 is to be sung as a response of the community to the priest's pronouncement of the Aaronic blessing.

Kraus' interpretation implies that the emphasis is on God as creator and as judge and as ruler of the world (verse 5). The nations are dependent on the same creator as Israel. They will see the salvation and blessing by God and be joyful and reverently acknowledge him.

Two arguments can be raised against this view. First, it would be the only case in the list of harvest texts (§ 2.2.1.) with such a direct focus on creation. The other texts all belong to the idiom of covenantal blessing and curse or the prophetic idiom of renewal after the exile. Second, as the translations presented above (§ 1.2) demonstrate, this theological view requires a nonmodal reading of the יִקְטֹל verbal forms of verses 7 and 8. However, this disturbs the composition of the psalm, since in verse 2 most translators continue to accept modality expressed by the יִקְטֹל forms.

The linguistic data discussed above call for an interpretation of Psalm 67 that concentrates on the experience of blessing in a specific historical setting. The prayer for God's blessing and the wish that God's praise extend to the peoples belong together based on experienced history—a new beginning made after the exile. The prophetic words of Zechariah 8:12 provide the theological

65 Kraus, Psalms 60-150, 41-42. To be fair to him, however, one should note that, like Delitzsch, he (p. 42) also claims that every harvest is a fulfillment of the promise in Lev 26.4.
66 Kraus, Psalms 60-150, 42.
67 Ibid.
framework for arriving at an interpretation of life in a new situation. That the "land has yielded its fruits" is a signal. Dearly God still cares, so may he continue to give his blessing.

How would the nations fit into this history? Walter Brueggemann, in his *Theology of the Old Testament*, offers a proposal. He assumes a certain shift in the actors of the psalm. In verse 2, "May he bless us" refers to Israel, but in verses 7 through 8, "may he bless us" includes the "the peoples" as well.

This extension of "us" is an interesting suggestion. One might suppose that when Psalm 67 is sung in a Christian church the congregation is actually performing the reading suggested by Brueggemann. In our judgment, however, this extension belongs to the reception of the text rather than to its interpretation. To be sure, as regards the nations, Psalm 67 comes close to statements that can be found in Zechariah 8. There, in verse 23, we are told that other peoples will address members of the restored Jewish community and say to them, "Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you." But they still say "you" and not "us."

However, even if we are not prepared to follow Brueggemann and read the nations into the psalm as part of the "us," the moment does come when we get involved. Even so, we are not involved as participants in the text but as its new readers. Also, as modern readers, our main challenge in the psalm's interpretation remains for us to find the proper balance among blessing, harvest, and history. Reading and singing requires awareness of our full tradition. Singing Psalm 67 implies that one cannot call a successful harvest a blessing without knowing one's history--the history of Israel and the history of the Christian community.

We should not mistake success in and by itself for salvation or blessing. Experience with history and prophecy helps to explain the harvest as a sign. It is a sign that God's history with his people goes on. Equally importantly, it is a sign that God's history goes on not exclusively with his own people. The function of this signally important harvest is to catch the attention of the nations and move them to recognize and praise God. The particular history of God and Israel is meant to become a blessing for all--as the prophecy of Zechariah 8 announces.

The words of Psalm 67 about God's blessing constitute the point were creation and history are in touch. The sphere of human experience is not just an arena of daily competition and of good luck or bad luck. It is the area wherein God gives his signs as an invitation to participate in his particular history with Israel, the church, and all mankind.

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THE RELEASE OF HOMICIDES FROM THE CITIES OF REFUGE
A Critical Monograph on Numbers 35:25
Abridged by the Author

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"And the congregation shall deliver the slayer out of the hand of the revenger of
blood, and the congregation shall restore him to the city of his refuge, whither he
was fled: and he shall abide in it unto the death of the high priest, which was
anointed with the holy oil" (Num. 35:25).

Why were the homicides who were detained in the cities of refuge released upon
the death of the high priest? The reason why this event of religious interest in Israel
should be the terminus of the slayer's confinement, as indicated in Numbers 35:25,
has elicited a variety of explanations. First, however, the ancient customs regarding
kinsmen and the procedure in cases of homicide must be ascertained.

In some ancient eastern civilizations if a man were slain by another man, the duty
of avenging him lay as a sacred obligation upon his nearest relative. In the Biblical record
the next of kin is called a go'el, the active participle of ga'al meaning "to deliver," "to
redeem," "to buyback." Oehler describes the go'el as "that particular relative whose
special duty it was to restore the violated family integrity, who had to redeem not only
landed property that had been alienated from the family (Lev. 25:25ff), or a member of
the family that had fallen into slavery (Lev. 25:47ff), but also the blood that had been
taken away from the family by murder." The in the last named capacity is almost
inevitably known as go'el haddam, "the redeemer of blood." The Authorized Version
translates this duty as "the avenger of blood," but Trumbull points out that the mission of
the go'el haddam under the Old Testament law was not vengeance but equity. He was
not an avenger, but a restorer, a redeemer, a balancer.

Genesis 9:6 expresses generally the precept that he who sheddeth man's blood, by
man shall his blood be shed. The first indication of the redemption of blood is to be found
in Genesis 27:45. The words of Rebekah, "Why should I be deprived also of you both in
one day? 'I mean that if Jacob were slain by the hand of Esau, then Esau would be slain
by the redeemer of blood. We cannot be certain how long blood-redemption existed
among the people, but it is clear from II Samuel 14:6-11 that it was still in existence and
in full force in David's time. The performance of the duty itself was probably regulated
by the closeness of the relationship and corresponded to the duty of the redeeming from
bondage (Lev. 25:49) and to the right of inheritance (Num. 27:8).

The order in which the nearest relative was considered is given in Leviticus
25:48-9; first a brother, then an uncle or an uncle's son, and after them any other relative.
While God Himself would avenge the blood that was shed (Gen. 9:5), He withdrew its
execution from subjective caprice and restricted it to cases of premeditated homicide or
murder. But to whom or where was the unintentional homicide to flee? The cities of
refuge were instigated for this express purpose.

7
The directions for the institution of the cities of refuge are to be found in Numbers 35:9-34. These are the fulfillment of the original promise God had given in Exodus 21:13 that He would appoint a place for a man who should unintentionally slay his neighbor to which he might flee from the "redeemer of blood." These cities were available to both the children of Israel and also the foreigners and settlers who were dwelling among them (Num. 35:15). Levitical or priests' towns were selected for all these free cities. Jamieson explains:

This was partly because it was to the priests and levites that the people would all look for an administration of justice and partly because these cities were the property of Jehovah. It was no doubt felt that they would be the most suitable and impartial judges and that their presence and counsel would calm and restrain the stormy passions of the blood avenger.\footnote{3}

The number of cities was fixed at six; three were to be "on this side Jordan," and three "in the land of Canaan" (Num. 35:14). The three cities on the eastern side of Jordan were selected by Moses himself; they were Golan in the territory of Manassah, Ramoth-gilead in the tribe of Gad, and Bezer in the lot of Reuben (Deut. 4:41-3). The three cities in Canaan were not appointed until the land was distributed among the nine and one-half tribes; they were Kedesh in Naphtali, Shechem in Mount Ephraim, and Kirjath-arba or Hebron in Judah (Josh. 20:7). The laws governing these six cities are repeated in Deuteronomy 19:1-13 with a special exhortation that they be carried out.

In Numbers 35:24-5 and Joshua 20:4 we find the procedure incumbent upon the manslayer who had fled to a sanctuary city. He was first of all to state his cause before the elders, no doubt at the gate.

The elders were those who, by common consent, were granted a superior position because of their descent, age or ability. They formed a local authority for the transaction of judicial or other business.\footnote{4}

The preliminary decision of the elders had to be given in the manslayer's favor before he could be admitted. If the avenger of blood appeared they were not to deliver up the person whom they had received, but they were to hand him over on the charge of the redeemer of blood to the congregation to which he belonged.

The trial then commenced. Themanslayer could only be convicted of murder by the evidence of at least two witnesses. One witness could not only be more easily mistaken than several, but he would be more likely to be partial than several persons who were unanimous in bearing witness to one and the same thing. Also, the judiciary was not ecclesiastical in this instance, but the people themselves were in charge. The intentions of the manslayer had next to be determined; the criterion regarding the determination whether the homicide was guilty or not will be dealt with at length later on. If the manslayer was declared a murderer, the elders of his city were to have him turned over to the avenger of blood (Deut. 19:11,12). If the manslayer was declared innocent, he was to be escorted to the nearest city of refuge to which he had fled and remain within the confines of that city until the death of the high priest. If he decided to leave the city of refuge before that time, the redeemer of blood could take hold of him and slay him outside the borders of the city, and "he would not be guilty of blood." (Num. 35:27) However,
after the death of the high priest he might return "into the land of his possession," that is, his hereditary possession (Num. 35:28) without the redeemer of blood being allowed to pursue him any longer.

The problem, then, is: Why were the homicides who were detained in the cities of refuge released upon the death of the high priest?

VARIOUS INTERPRETATIONS WITH EVALUATION

The Expiatory View

This view is held by those who would explain the release of the manslayers at the time of the death of the high priest by assigning expiatory or atoning value to this significant event. They point out that human blood has been shed, though inadvertently, and demands expiation (cf. Gen. 9:5, 6; Num. 35:33). God in His mercy made provision for cities of refuge so that the offender could flee the wrath of the redeemer of blood. The blood of the homicide was not required to be shed because he had not sinned willfully. Inasmuch as the release of the homicides was "coincident with the high priest's death, great value is placed upon the death of the high priest himself. Keil states:

The death of the high priest had the same result in a certain sense, in relation to his time of office, as his function on the day of atonement had had every year.⁵

Great emphasis is placed upon the appositional clause in Numbers 35:25 which refers to the high priest "who has been anointed with the holy oil." Keil holds that this definitive clause makes this viewpoint "unmistakably evident," and "it would appear unmeaning and superfluous on any other view."⁶ He further elaborates this point by saying:

This clause points to the inward connection between the return of the slayer and the death of the high priest. The anointing with the holy oil was a symbol of the communication of the Holy Ghost, by which the high priest was empowered to act as mediator and representative of the nation before God, so that he alone could carry out the yearly and general expiation for the whole nation, on the great day of atonement. But as his life and work acquired a representative signification through this anointing with the Holy Ghost, his death might also be regarded as a death for the sins of the people, by virtue of the Holy Ghost imparted to him, through which the unintentional manslayer received the benefits of the propitiation for his sin before God, so that he could return to his native town, without further exposure to the vengeance of the avenger of blood.⁷

The strength of this view is supposed to be enhanced by the fact that its tradition goes back to the earliest days of church history. Keil points out that many of the Rabbins, fathers, and earlier commentators maintain that the death of the high priest was regarded as expiatory. Both the Talmud and Mekelta agree with Philo in holding this view, and they are followed in general by Jewish commentators. Some modern commentators who would concur with this view are Barth, Gossman, Lange and Williams.
The word *kipper* whose primary meaning is "to cover" is usually found in the piel and constructed with *be'ad, le,* and *'al* meaning "to expiate an offense" or "to make atonement for an offender." The word "atone," then, is a translator's attempt at interpreting the meaning of *kipper*. This word, however, has been seized upon and used in a theological sense to express the entire work of Christ upon the cross, and it is used to represent the work of the lamb of God taking away the sin of the world. The Standard Dictionary defines the meaning of expiation thusly: "The active means of expiating, or of making reparation or satisfaction, as for offense, or sin; the removal of guilt by suffering punishment; atonement, or an atonement." In its Old Testament usage, atonement is not to be found in the Authorized Version, it is used as a translation of *kipper* in Numbers 35:33 (ASV) in the sense indicated above. Commentators use "atonement" and "expiation" as synonymous so the writer will regard them as such and view them in their Old Testament sense.

Although several commentators hold the Expiatory View, Keil clearly is the chief representative with the others merely following his lead. He goes back to Genesis 9:5 which asserts generally the precept that he who sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed. This fundamental truth is based upon the idea of man's being created in the image of God, and murder being primarily a transgression against the Creator and Lord of human life (Gen. 9:6). The shedding of blood pollutes the land and to allow the blood of man to go unexpiated amounts to defiling the land (cf. Num. 35:33-4). The explanation that appeals to those holding this view is that the high priest, who has received a representative significance due to his anointing, satisfies the demands of the law himself when he dies. The similarity between this function of the high priest and the "heavenly One, who through the eternal (Holy) Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, that we might be redeemed from our transgressions, and receive the promised eternal inheritance" is often pointed out.

Numbers 35 clearly delineates between two kinds of killing in reference to which the avenging of blood is commanded; verses 16-21 describe willful murder while in verses 22-3 accidental homicide is discussed. In verses 16-21 two kinds of activities are described as murder. Verse 16-18 is a case where one strikes another in such a way that death may be seen as the probable consequence; that is, if an iron instrument were used, such as an ax, hatchet, or hammer; or a stone "which filled the hand" meaning no doubt a stone large enough to kill someone; or a wooden instrument, a thick club or a strong wooden instrument, the suspected person was to be declared a murderer. "The suspicion would rest upon anyone who had used an instrument that endangered life and therefore was not generally used in striking." Verses 20-21 give a case where one has hit another in hatred or threw at him lying in wait, or struck him with the hand in enmity, so that he died. In this case the means by which the actual murder is effected is immaterial. He is declared a murderer in both instances; and if he flees to a city of refuge, the elders of the city are to have him thrown out and delivered over to the avenger of blood (cf. Deut. 19: 11, 12). In this instance even the altar couldn't protect (cf. Exod. 21:14). Clearly, such a premeditated act is a sin committed "with a high hand," i.e. defiantly and deliberately; the law provides no opportunity for a sacrifice (cf. Exod. 21:12, 14; Num. 15:30-31).
On the other hand, the law provided for six cities of refuge in order to shelter the one who had slain a man not out of enmity from his heart. Numbers 35:22 and Exodus 21:13 cover the case in which hurt was not intentional, while Deuteronomy 19:4 deals with inadvertent or unintentional manslaughter. An example of the last mentioned case is given in Deuteronomy 19:5 where a man accidentally kills his neighbor in the forest while chopping wood when the head of the ax being used slips off and strikes his neighbor so that he dies. The action on the part of the man-slayer in this case would be the same for anyone who sinned "unwittingly." He was to bring a she-goat one year old, without blemish, and the animal was to be made a sin-offering for the sin which had been committed. After the atonement had been made, the offender was promised that he would be forgiven (cf. Lev. 4:27-31; Num. 15:27-28). That accidental homicide is classed and treated as sinning "unwittingly" or "through error" and is definitely stated as such in Numbers 35:11 and Joshua 20:3, 9.

An example of an atonement to be provided for an untraced murder is to be found in Deuteronomy 21:1-9. If a man be found murdered in the open country, and there be no indication who the murderer is, the elders of the city who are nearest to the spot where the corpse was found are to procure a heifer which has never been used for any work. They are to take it to a running stream, and having there slain it in the presence of the priests, to wash their hands over it. At the same time they solemnly avow before God that their city is guiltless of the murder and entreat Him to forgive His people for the crime that has been committed in its midst. "Blood innocently shed defiles a land or people until some recognized atonement be offered for it."  

The writer concludes that the homicide who is admitted into a city of refuge would have made atonement for the blood which he had shed inadvertently and which had defiled the land of His God; this would have been made in the manner as specified in the law as stated above. This would, of course, render the Expiatory View as unnecessary. Lange's contention that "the great event of the death of the high priest covers with respect to God a mass of sins which have risen from ignorance or mistakes" is nullified and completely out of order. The errors of the Expiatory View need now to be exposed and answered.

As already noted, Keil asserts that the death of the high priest was regarded as expiatory unmistakably from the addition of the qualifying clause, "who has been anointed with the holy oil." The instructions for the preparation of the holy oil are to be found in Exodus 30:22-38. The specifications for the ingredients that are to make up this oil are in verses 23-25; the tent of meeting, the articles that are included in the tent, and finally Aaron and his sons are instructed to be anointed with this preparation. Verse 31 says, "and thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, This shall be a holy anointing oil unto me throughout your generations."

Similar qualifying words or clauses relating to the high priest are to be found interspersed throughout the Pentateuch. For the phrase "the anointed priest" see Leviticus 4:3, 5, 16; 6:22. See Leviticus 21:10, 12 and 16:32 for such clauses as "who shall be anointed" and "upon whose head the anointing oil is poured" etc. Gray states, "Occasionally and chiefly, as here (Num. 35:25) when no reference has been made by name to the person intended, more distinctive terms or descriptions are used; these most frequently refer to the distinctive anointing of Aaron and his successors" (cf. also Exod. 29:7, 29; Lev. 8:12). Weinel considers such passages to be additions, while Gray calls them "redundant definitions." It seems to the writer that the addition of
qualifying words, phrases or clauses is used by the writers of the Old Testament to point out that which is distinctive and most significant concerning the man or his office. Compare Jeroboam I, for example. "Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin" is repeated over and over again. Later wicked kings were described often as "walking in the sins of Jeroboam" or "following the sins of Jeroboam" or "departing not from the sins of Jeroboam." That for which Jeroboam was chiefly remembered was his defection from Jehovah worship and the leading of subsequent kings in an idolatrous direction. Such a literary custom would explain the presence of such a phrase in Numbers 35:25.

Unquestionably the significance of the phrase under discussion is that the anointing of the high priest set him aside in a special way to carry out the functions incumbent upon his office. This is clearly evident in Exodus 30:30 where we read, "and thou shalt anoint Aaron and his sons, and sanctify them, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office." Keil gives an excellent statement of this fact:

The anointing with the holy oil was a symbol of the communication of the Holy Ghost, by which the high priest was empowered to act as mediator and representative of the nation before God, so that he alone could carry out the yearly and general expiation for the whole nation, on the great day of atonement.\textsuperscript{14}

Unger broadens the anointing to cover prophet, priest, and king; and he gives references to show that the coming of the Spirit in connection with the office and the anointing are closely related.

Kings, priests, and prophets were anointed with oil or ointment. . . oil was a fitting symbol of the Spirit, or spiritual principle of life, by virtue of its power to sustain and fortify the vital energy; and the anointing oil, which was prepared according to divine instructions, was therefore a symbol of the Spirit of God, as the principle of spiritual life which proceeds from God and fills the natural being of the creature with powers of divine life. The anointing with oil, therefore, was a symbol of endowment with the Spirit of God for the duties of the office to which a person was consecrated. (Lev. 8:12; I Sam. 10:1, 6; 16:13, 14; Isa. 61:1)\textsuperscript{15}

The addition of the clause "who was anointed with the holy oil," therefore, has to do with the setting aside of the high priest for his priestly functions, being a symbol of the endowment of the Spirit of God. Of course, the death of the high priest was hardly a duty of the office to which he was consecrated, and the above interpretation of this clause would exclude the Expiatory View.

The proposition of a man other than the God-man, Christ Jesus, being offered in any sense as an atonement for sin presents a startling innovation, to say the least. As Watson puts it, "Although many of the Rabbins and fathers held this view as to the expiatory nature of the high priest's death, there is absolutely nothing in scripture or reason to support it."\textsuperscript{16} The high priest himself could not become an acceptable atonement for the sins of anybody, including himself. Although he was to be one who had no physical blemish (Lev. 21:16-24), yet, being a descendant of Adam, he had a sinful nature. We find provision for a sin-offering to be made for Aaron and his sons when they were consecrated to the priesthood (Exod. 29:10ff), and on the yearly day
of atonement the high priest was to "make atonement for himself and the people" (Lev. 16:24). This utterly refutes the contention of Philo that "the high priest was immaculate and sinless." Of course, it is impossible to speak of an atonement without the shedding of the blood as the value of the sacrifice was due to the life of the victim being shed. Needless to say, the high priest was not offered up as a sacrifice when he expired. His only hope was the substitutionary sacrifices which were made on the yearly day of atonement for himself and the people which looked forward to that day when the Lord Jesus Christ, the lamb of God, who would with one offering perfect for ever them that are sanctified (Heb. 10:14); but in the meantime the high priest would have to pay the penalty binding upon all mankind, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die."

Keil, in attempting to bolster his position, maintains that many of the Rabbins, fathers, and earlier commentators regarded the death of the high priest as expiatory. The writer has been unable to find any comment whatsoever from the Anti-Nicene or Post-Nicene fathers and has traced the modern commentators who hold this view as far back as Keil himself. Quite evidently, this view dates back at least to Philo and has come down to the present time as a part of Rabbinical theology. Ginzberg says:

The phrase, frequently recurring in the Talmud, 'the death of the high priest atones' (Mak. 11b) really shows that, according to the opinion current among the Rabbis, the chief factor was the death with its atoning power. This is easily explainable from the point of view of rabbinical theology, since in general the death of the pious acted as an atonement for Israel... and the death of the high priest all the more possesses power of atonement.

The practice of Keil and his followers of using extra-Biblical sources and Jewish tradition to support their view is precarious to say the least. The writer emphatically rejects this view as being unbiblical and foreign to the doctrinal teaching of the atonement as set forth in the Scripture.

The Typical View

The commentaries that set forth this suggestion are divided somewhat in their emphases; one would call the death of the high priest directly a typical atonement while the other would say that if the high priest's death held a general typical significance in looking forward to the day when Christ, the great high priest, would releast those captives from sin who trust in Him. The typical atonement position, although possibly traceable to Keil, is set forth by Ellicott in the following eloquent manner:

As the high priest, by reason of the anointing with the holy oil, became qualified to act as the representative of the nation, and in that capacity acted as their mediator for the great day of atonement, so the death of the high priest assumed a symbolical or representative character, and became a type of that great High Priest who, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God, and who by His death made a propitiation for the sins of the world. Thus, as by the death of the Jewish high priest a typical atonement was made for the sin of the Israelitish manslayer, and he was restored thereupon to "the land of his possession" amongst his brethren, so by the death of our
High Priest they who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them, are restored to the inheritance which had been forfeited by sin, and made joint heirs with Christ of those mansions which He has gone before to prepare for those who love Him.¹⁹

Others who concur with the typical atonement view are Keil and Gossman.

Those who would see a general typical significance in the death of the high priest reason something like the following elaborate statement from *The Bible Commentary*:

The High Priest, as the head and representative of the whole chosen family of sacerdotal mediators, as exclusively entrusted with some of the chief priestly functions, as alone privileged to make yearly atonement within the Holy of Holies, and to gain, from the mysterious Urim and Thummim, special revelations of the will of God, was, preeminently a type of Christ. And thus the death of each successive high-priest presignified that death of Christ by which the captives were to be freed, and the remembrance of transgressions made to cease.²⁰

Others who concur with this view are Ainsworth, Barth, Benson, Butler, Clarke, Edersheim, Wordsworth, and James M. Gray.

In regard to the subject of types, there are two schools of thought as to what constitutes a type. Bishop Marsh is the representative of the older school and set forth his famous principle in his *Lectures on the Criticism and Interpretation of the Bible* where he held that a type is only a type if the New Testament specifically so designates it to be such. Ramm says regarding this tenet:

This is a very strict principle and was advocated to curtail much of the fanciful and imaginary in typological interpretation. Because it is a stern and precise formula it has exerted to great influence on theological thought. Many Protestant exegetes if not adhering to the very letter of Marsh's principle certainly follow it very closely.²¹

Needless to say, such a view would immediately negate the possibility of any kind of typical view regarding the death of the high priest as there is nothing to be found in the New Testament relevant to this event. Such an outlook is the safest possible position and the writer is greatly prone to adhere to this view; however, it is a position taken largely in reacting from the abuse of a good thing. This is not always a healthy outlook and may rob us of precious truth.

Such men as Glassius, Fairbairn, Terry and others would go along with Marsh in saying that the New Testament is the point of departure in typological studies; but they insist that Marsh did not dig out the full teaching of the New Testament on the subject. Glassius propounded the view that types were of two sorts, innate and inferred. An innate type is a type specifically declared to be such in the New Testament. An inferred type is one which has no specific designation in the New Testament, but its existence is justified by the nature of the New Testament materials on typology. Fairbairn would say that the Old Testament and New Testament contain the same basic system of theology; they run side by side like two parallel rivers. Their parallelism is indicated by occasional channels or types which connect them. These channels or types are possible only because the two rivers run parallel. The Marshian principle for him fails to realize that other channels may be cut through which are not specifically named in Scripture; otherwise the rela-
The fact that Aaron as the high priest was a type of Christ is clearly attested to in the book of Hebrews. Unger presents the following summary of the high priesthood of Aaron and Melchisedek, which is substantially the view presented in the Scofield Bible:

Aaron as high priest is a type of Christ. The functions, dress and ritual connected with the high priest's anointing are minutely instructive of the Person and work of Christ as a Priest. Although Christ is a Priest after the order of Melchisedek (Psa. 110:4; Heb. 5:6; 6:20; 7:21), He executes His priestly office after the pattern of Aaron. The order is expounded in Hebrews, chapter 9. Death often disrupted the Aaronic priesthood; therefore, Christ is a Priest after the order of Melchisedek as "King of Righteousness" and "King of Peace" and in the perpetuity of His priesthood.

Scofield makes the following added comment:

The contrast between the high priesthood of Melchisedek and Aaron is only as to person, "order" (or appointment), and duration. In His work Christ follows the Aaronic pattern, the "shadow" of which Christ was the substance (Heb. 8:1-6; 9:1-28).

However, even though the Aaronic priesthood is set forth in the New Testament as typical of Christ, not every facet concerning the high priest necessarily has a New Testament counterpart. Ramm wisely points out an imperative caution which should be exercised in deciding what is typical:

Great care must be taken to lift out of the Old Testament item precisely that which is typical and no more. There are points of pronounced similarity and equally so, points of pronounced dissimilarity between Christ and Aaron or Christ and Moses. The typical truth is at the point of similarity. One of the cardinal errors in typology is to make typical the elements of dissimilarity in a type.

We must, therefore, in all fairness examine those areas which are divergent in order to ascertain whether we should declare the death of the high priest as being typical of Christ's death.

The Typical Atonement View, which evidently finds its origin in Keil's writings, is based squarely upon the Expiatory View. Keil states:

But inasmuch as, according to this view (Expiatory View), the death of the high priest had the same result in a certain sense, in relation to his time of office, as his function of the day of atonement had had every year, the death of the earthly high priest became thereby a type of that of the heavenly One, who, through the eternal (holy) Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God, that we might be redeemed from our transgressions, and receive the promised eternal inheritance (Heb. 9:14,15).

The writer rejects this view as being untenable and holds that the arguments propounded in refuting the Expiatory view immediately negate the possibility of a typical atonement. It is im-
possible to discuss the word atonement without having the necessity of efficacious blood being shed. Lange, who regards the death of the high priest as a "peculiar method of atonement," helps to refute his own position in pointing out a glaring weakness in the typical atonement view by saying:

Still we must emphasize the fact that this dynamic or moral efficacy of his (high priest's) death is not mentioned among the definite types of the Old Testament, and could not be so mentioned, since the death of the high priest was not always edifying.\(^{27}\)

Watson points out what has already been emphasized in the discussion under the Expiatory View; namely, that the expiation provided for under the sacrificial system of the Mosaic law was pertinent only as far as the functions of the office of the high priest were concerned, and was entirely inefficacious regarding the person himself. He says:

All the expiation, moreover, which the Mosaic law provided for was ceremonial. If the death of the high priest was efficacious only so far as his functions were, then there could be no atonement or appearance of atonement for moral guilt, even that of culpable homicide for instance. The death of the high priest was therefore in no sense a type of the death of Christ, the whole meaning of which lies in relation to moral, not ceremonial, offenses.\(^{28}\)

Although a goodly number of commentators see the death of the high priest as foreshadowing the death of Christ, in effect they are advocating the same thing propounded by the advocates of the Typical Atonement View. They fail to see one of the most glaring points of divergence between the death of the high priest and the death of Christ; namely, that Christ didn't die as the high priest. This is positively stated in Hebrews 8:4; "Now if he (Christ) were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, seeing there are those who offer the gifts according to the law." We must remember also that there was a high priest functioning under the Mosaic economy while Christ was on earth; and, besides, Christ could not have received His anointing as a high priest as He was of the tribe of Judah. Christ didn't assume His high priestly functions until a divinely appointed time subsequent to His ascension. Such points of difference force the writer to reject any typical view put forth regarding the significance of the death of the high priest. Habershon holds that there must be either a New Testament passage giving authority to call something a type or some expression or analogy which indicates the antitype. She states: "We cannot state with certainty that anything is a type unless we have some warrant for doing so."\(^{29}\)

The writer is loath to divest the Bible of typical truth when such is present to bless and instruct in the things of the Lord; nevertheless, the attempt by the advocates of this view to find typical significance in the death of the high priest does violence to the entire study of typology.

In the final analysis, it is the opinion of the writer that as far as the problem with which we are confronted is concerned, no typical view can offer a satisfactory explanation as to why the death of the high priest released the homicides from the cities of refuge. We must seek somewhere else for an immediate reason why the Lord God settled upon such a unique feature. Patrick, after affirming that "it (the death of the high priest) might represent our deliverance only by the death of the Son of God," reverses himself saying:
... of which many great men looked upon this as a type or shadow; though it must be confessed, there is not the least signification of this in the New Testament. And since the great expiation, which the high-priest made every year on the day of atonement, did not procure such men their liberty, I cannot look upon it (the release of the homicides) as the effect of the high-priest's death, but only of that which followed upon it, by virtue of this law. 30

The Grief-stricken View

This view explains the release of the homicides from the cities of refuge in terms of the extreme sorrow which was supposed to swallow up all personal regrets and resentments occasioned by the high priest's death. The impact of such a national calamity is supposed to have so overcome and shocked the avengers of blood that they would naturally have forfeited any future hostility toward innocent manslayers. Jamieson clearly propounds this view:

But the period of his (the manslayer's) release from this confinement was not until the death of the high priest. That was a season of public affliction, when private sorrows were sunk or overlooked under a sense of national calamity, and when the death of so eminent a servant of God naturally led all to serious consideration about their own mortality. 31

Other commentators who rely solely upon this view or incorporate it into their overall explanation are Lowth, Lange, Matthew Henry, and Scott.

Unquestionably, this view can be traced back to the 12th century Jewish Rabbi Maimonides. His eloquent explanation is as follows:

It (the city of refuge) is a prudent charity to the manslayer, and to the relations of him that was slain; for by this means the manslayer was kept out of the sight of the avenger of blood, who might have been tempted, some time or other, to fall upon him, if he had come in his way: but by long absence his anger might be mitigated, at least by the death of the high-priest, the most excellent of all other persons, and most dear to everyone in the nation. Which made the public grief so great when he died, that men forgot their private resentments: for nothing could fallout more grievous to all the people than the death of the high-priest, which swallowed up all other grief. (More Nevoch. par. iii. cap. 40). 32

In setting forth such a view, Maimonides departs radically from the traditional rabbinical theology. Although all Jewish commentators have an extremely high regard for the person of the high priest, Ginzberg curtly disregards this view with the following words, "Maimonides' explanation that the death of the high priest was an event that moved the entire people so much that no thoughts of vengeance could arise in the avenger of blood, conforms as little to the spirit of the early rabbis as to that of the Bible. 33
There is no question but that this view is foreign to the Scriptural passages dealing with the cities of refuge. Moreover, the question of retribution performed for blood having been shed was not based upon an enraged temper or even family honor; but the avenger of blood was required under the Mosaic law to requite the blood that had been shed by shedding the blood of him who had shed the blood (cf. Num. 35:33). Oehler succinctly states the matter, "The avenging of blood becomes a divine command; it is not merely a matter of honor, but a duty of religion."\(^{34}\) It is because the protection of the integrity of the family is also at stake that the incumbent to redeem the blood shed is chosen from the nearest kin. There is no question but that feelings would soar as the result of blood being shed and revenge would be apt to be taken "while the manslayer's heart is hot" (cf. Deut. 19:6). The whole point of the cities of refuge was to protect the manslayer who slew his neighbor "unwittingly" and "was not worthy of death" (cf. Deut. 19:6) before injustice was performed from an uncontrolled temper. (Compare the needless blood feuds that are to be found among the Arab tribes even to this day.)

Maimonides' contention that the long absence of the manslayer might mitigate the anger of the avenger of blood is open to grave doubts. A lapse of time could cause such resentments to be abated and often forgotten, but in some cases we can be assured that the initial heat of revenge could eat at the heart like a canker so that it became more inflamed instead of subsiding. We must remember also that there was the possibility of the high priest dying the day after the acquittal of the homicide so that the memory of the event would yet be fresh in the mind of the redeemer of blood. Some of the commentators have wondered at the equity of this law whereby one man might be separated from his family for many years while another for but a few months, weeks, or even days. The basic point is that the provision set down by the law hinged upon the death of the high priest himself, and God in His wisdom and grace had provided a refuge for the innocent manslayer.

We can be assured that the death of the high priest, while no doubt causing a period of public grief, would not change the heart of a man set upon revenge. Moreover, the homicides had to be declared innocent before they could be admitted to the cities of refuge in the first place. We must assume that they would have made an atonement provided for their action and consequently satisfied the demands of the law. The only possible legal way in which the avenger of "blood could seek vengeance upon the homicide would be if the homicide forsook the protection of the city where he had been instructed to stay. Then the avenger of blood could slay the manslayer if he chose, and "not be guilty of blood" (cf. Num. 35:26-28). Actually we cannot even assume that every redeemer of blood carried such resentment in his heart in view of the fact that his relative was slain "through error." The fatal weakness of this view is that if such a phenomenon were even possible it describes the supposed result of the death of the high priest and does not explain what significance is inherent in the law itself which effects the release of the manslayers; actually, it explains nothing.

Administrative

The writer regards this view as the true solution of the problem. This view regards the administrative term of the high priest as constituting a definite epoch which is terminated at his death. The cases of the homicides in the cities of refuge are so vitally incorporated into the administrative life of the high priest that their cases are expunged from the record and considered as null and void upon his decease. Savile states the matter thusly:
One thing all knew respecting the anointed high-priest, viz. that he was the head and representative of the whole community in matters pertaining to life and death; and as some limitation would evidently require to be set to the restraint laid on the manslayer, the thought would naturally commend itself to the people to make responsibility for an accidental death cease and terminate with the death of him who stood nearest to God in matters of that description. In the general relations of the community a change had entered in that respect, which touched all interests, and it was fit that it should specially touch those who had been casually bereft of the freedom of life.\(^{35}\)

Higher critics of a certain type take this view, as they look on the passages regarding the institution of the cities of refuge, as being a late development coming from "the Document P." They see a gradual conflict between civil and priestly interests, with more and more influence accruing to the high priest until he had become the political as well as the religious leader of the people. McNeile in the *Cambridge Bible of Schools and Colleges* says:

> The high priest was the head of the religious affairs of the Jewish church, and rose, in the popular estimation, to a higher importance than the civil governor who was appointed by a foreign power. So that "unto the death of the high priest" would have almost the same force that the words "until the death of the reigning sovereign" would bear today.\(^{36}\)

Other commentators holding this view are Aarton, Dummelow, Genung, Henry, Patrick, Reihm, and Winterbotham.

In this view, the duration of the high priest's office is treated as the cessation of an epoch where certain questions that have remained open are to be regarded as now settled. Baudissin uses Numbers 35:25, 28 as verses which indicate that "the high-priestly dignity is clearly thought of as conferred for life."\(^{37}\) At the death of the high priest, therefore, a completed period of the theocratic life is effected, and all of the cases which have detained the homicides in the cities of refuge are considered as null and void. The manslayers are permitted to return to their inheritance without fear of coercion from the avenger of the blood and a new period in the life of the nation begins with the inauguration of the next high priest. This is the singular secular authority ascribed to the high priest, and it arises out of his official position as high priest of the land. The six cities of refuge formed a part of the forty-eight Levitical cities; both Numbers 35:9-34 and Joshua 20:1-9 are joined to passages which record the inheritance of the land as distributed to the Levites. The priests received as dwelling-places thirteen of the towns which were given to the Levites (cf. Josh. 21:4, 10ff). Of course, the priests had no inheritance in the land; they were to be sanctified solely to the Lord and were his portion (Num. 18:20). The priests were partially supported through the tithes of the Levites (Num. 18:26), and the Levites rendered various services in the tent of meeting (Num. 18:31). The Levites would have heard the case of the manslayer when he first arrived at the gate. They would have been in charge of escorting this person to his congregation in order to hear his innocence declared. Finally, they would place the homicide in one of the six Levitical cities where protection would be available from the avenger of blood. The writer feels, therefore, that the close connection both in function and Scriptural context between the priests, Levites and the high priest plus the fact that the nature of
the homicides' detention was a legal issue, makes the connection between the high priest and the cities of refuge a natural and intimate one. Henry states the case emphatically:

The cities of refuge being all of them Levites' cities, and the high-priest being the head of the tribe, and consequently having a peculiar dominion over those cities, those that were confined to them might properly be looked upon as his prisoners, and so his death must be their discharge; it was, as it were, at his suit, that the delinquent was imprisoned, and therefore at his death it fell.\(^{38}\)

Patrick also stresses this aspect:

For the high-priest having a great power everywhere, and particularly in these cities of the priests and Levites, over whom he was chief, it is possible that manslayers might be confined here by some act of his authority; which expiring with himself, he was released.\(^{39}\)

The significance of the appositional clause, "who has been anointed with the holy oil" as pointing up the distinctive and official nature of the high priest's calling; namely, that of representative of the people before God has been indicated above. The stress which is laid upon the fact of the high priest's death (Num. 35:28) plus this solemn notice of his having been anointed with the holy oil, seem to point unmistakably to something in his official and consecrated character which made it right that the rigour of the law should die with him.\(^{40}\) Henry describes the matter as *Actio moritur cum persona*--the suit expires with the party.\(^{41}\)

The significant parallel of this situation and the year of Jubilee is mentioned by Winterbotham. He states, "What the Jubilee was to the debtor who had lost his property, that the death of the high priest was to the homicide who had lost his liberty."\(^{42}\) Not only did the homicide lose his liberty, but he was deprived of his inheritance for a period of time; perhaps even for the rest of his life. Inasmuch as both the year of Jubilee and the death of the high priest are vitally related to the inheritance of the individuals involved, it seems that this comparison is valid and points to the consistency of the principle behind these laws (cf. Lev. 25 and Num. 35:28). Those higher critics who can manage to say anything at all constructive regarding our problem after they have labored diligently to prove this law to be post-exilic inevitably adopt this view. Actually, by assigning the high priest the role of the reigning authority in their evolutionary conception, their view of the authority of the high priest is substantially the same as those of us who regard this law as being pre-monarchial. We can, therefore, use with profit the comparison which George F. Moore, shows of the sweeping changes which a reigning monarch might make at the beginning of his administration. He says, "The sojourn in the city of refuge is regarded as a species of exile, a punishment which was removed by a general amnesty at the ascension of the new high priest, the real sovereign."\(^{43}\)

The writer concurs with this view which seems to be the most natural and obvious explanation of the problem. The problem is one fundamentally of Jewish jurisprudence in which an administrative change in the high priest begins a new era as far as the cities of refuge are concerned. This statute of limitations is succinctly summed up by Winterbotham: "When he (the high priest) died all processes of vengeance lapsed, because they had really been commenced in his name."\(^{44}\)
THE RELEASE OF HOMICIDES FROM THE CITIES OF REFUGE

DOCUMENTATION

6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
12. Lange, loc. cit.
15. Merrill F. Unger, Unger's Bible Dictionary (Moody), 805.
17. Louis Ginzberg, The Jewish Encyclopedia (Funk & Wagnalls), II, 259.
18. Ibid.
22. Ibid., 201.
27. Lange, op. cit., 188.
31. Jamieson, op. cit., 120.
32. Patrick, loc. cit.
33. Ginzberg, loc. cit.
34. Gustav Friedrich Oehler, Theology of the Old Testament (Funk & Wagnalls), 237.
40. R. Winterbotham, "Numbers," *The Pulpit Commentary* (Funk & Wagnalls), 448.
42. Winterbotham, *loc. cit.*
44. Winterbotham, *loc. cit.*

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THE BOOK CALLED "NUMBERS"

BY ALLAN A. MACRAE, PH.D.

Too many Christians, have been diverted from giving the fourth book of the Bible the amount of study that it deserves by the unattractiveness of its title and the dull impression which they have received from a glance at its opening chapters.

An unfortunate habit has developed in American publishing in recent years, of giving books flashy titles, which often tell nothing about their actual contents. These titles may help in securing sales for a book when it first appears, but probably in the long run they cause less attention to be paid to it than would be the case if the title pointed clearly to the real subject of the book. In relation to the Book of Numbers, something even worse has occurred. A dull title has been affixed, which gives little idea of the subject of the book as a whole, and therefore has been doubly effective in keeping Bible students from reaping the rich treasures which the book contains.

NAMING THE BOOKS OF MOSES

A truly scientific approach to the Bible, as to any other subject requires that we examine each separate feature carefully in order to determine exactly what it means and how dependable and authentic it is. It thus becomes important for us to ask whether the names of the Old Testament books are, like their contents, a part of the inspired Word of God. Many of our English titles are taken from the Greek translation and were not in the Hebrew Old Testament at all. It would seem most likely that there were no titles on any of the books when first written, and that the titles were added later. This is certainly true in the case of the Pentateuch. The Jews have ordinarily spoken of these five books
as the Law of Moses, and sometimes have referred to them as "the five fifths." In our printed Hebrew Bibles, the heading placed before each book of the Pentateuch simply consists of one or more of the words with which it begins. This seems hardly consistent with the idea that these headings were titles put in by the original author. It would look rather in the direction of their being merely identifying labels, added by some later copyist.

The Greek translation of the Pentateuch, which is known as the Septuagint, was made in Egypt at some time between 300 and 200 B.C. In it new titles are placed over the five books of Moses. Four of these titles are good descriptions of the books, and some of them are decided improvements over the headings used in the Hebrew Bible. It is quite different, unfortunately, in the case of the Book of Numbers.

Printed Hebrew Bibles place over the Book of Genesis a Hebrew word which means "in the beginning." This is simply the first word of the book. The Greek translation bears the title Genesis, "beginning," which in this case is almost an exact translation of the Hebrew word and is also a good description of the actual contents of the book.

Similarly, in our printed Hebrew Bibles, the second book of Moses bears as a heading the two Hebrew words with which it begins. These words may be translated "and these are the names." Sometimes the book is designated simply by the second of these words and called "Names." This Hebrew title, however, gives no idea of the contents of the book. While the book begins by naming the sons of Jacob who went down into Egypt, this is purely introductory. In the Greek translation a descriptive title was substituted, consisting of the Greek word *Exodos*, which means "going out." This title is an excellent description of the contents of the book, and is clearly an improvement over the Hebrew designation.

In the Hebrew Bible, the title of the third book consists of its first word, "and he called." This gives practically no idea of its contents. In the Greek translation the word *Leuitikon* was substituted, indicating that the book contains
directions or the activities of the Levitical priests and their Levitical assistants.

Skipping over the fourth book for a moment, we note that the fifth book is designated in the Hebrew by means of its first two words "and these are the words." This is very similar to the title of Exodus, "and these are the names," or of Leviticus, "and he called." The Greek version has substituted the title Deuteronomion, which means "Second Law." The book consists almost entirely of the addresses which Moses gave to the people shortly before their entrance into Canaan, reiterating and repeating the great Law of God, which had already been presented in Exodus and making certain changes in it to fit their circumstances after they would settle in the promised land. Thus, the Greek title aptly describes the contents of the book, and is very appropriate.

In three of these four instances, the Greek title is clearly an improvement over the Hebrew title, while in the case of Genesis the two are substantially identical. In all four cases, our English Bibles use a simple transliteration of the Greek word. Surely it would have been better if these titles had been translated into English instead of being merely transliterated from the Greek.

Although the word genesis is something used in common English to mean "beginning," it would probably be easier for the mass of English speaking people if the word had been translated into English, and the book entitled "The Book of Beginnings."

Similarly the word exodus is occasionally used as a common term in modern English, but it would be more easily understood by many of our people if the book were entitled "The Departure of the Israelites from Egypt," or perhaps still better, "The Deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt."

Leviticus designates the third book fairly well, but it might be even better if we were to lengthen the title a little and call it "The Levitical Legislation," or "Rules for the Priests."
Most English readers have little idea what the name Deuteronomy means. It is “all Greek” to them. Would it not have been better if in English this book had borne such a title as “Moses’ Farewell,” or “The Final Advice of the Great Leader”?

PROBLEM OF NAMING “NUMBERS”

Returning to the fourth book, we find that the situation is altogether different. In the Hebrew Bible, it is not its first word, but its fourth, that is used as a title. This word forms an admirable description of the contents of the book. The Greek translators gave it a descriptive title, which instead of fitting excellently, as in the case of the other four books, is not at all well selected. In English, instead of transliterating the Greek title, we have in this sole instance translated it, thus compounding the injury done by the poor selection of the title in the Greek.

The Greek title of the book is Arithmoi, the word from which our English word arithmetic is derived. Probably less damage would have been done if this word had been transliterated, so that most English readers would simply take it as a meaningless title and look into the book to see what it contains. Unfortunately, the misleading title has been translated, and the average reader gains the impression that the book is simply a dry list of statistics. It is true that its first two chapters describe the taking of a census, and another census is described in chapter 26. Yet if a few chapters were taken out, there would be less numbers remaining than in many another book of the Bible.

The Hebrew title, “in the wilderness,” aptly describes the contents of this book, since it deals with the wilderness journey of the Israelites from Mt. Sinai to the borders of the promised land. It begins with the preparation for the journey; it goes on to tell of many interesting and important events along the way; finally, it describes the preparations for entrance into Canaan itself.

What a shame that in the one case where the Greek has made a poor selection of a title, this title should not only have been taken over into the English version, but actually
translated instead of being merely transliterated, as was
done in the other four cases. This has doubtless led to much
neglect of a book which, as a matter of fact, is as vital and
important for the Christian today as any book in the entire
Old Testament.

This may seem to be a rather extreme statement, but
proves not to be so when we examine the situation. Genesis
describes the creation of the world and the beginning of the
conditions which face us here. This is very interesting and
worthwhile, and yet its interest to us may seem to be some-
what indirect. We face a situation; it is valuable to know
how it came about, but we are more interested in knowing
what to do about it now.

Exodus describes how the Israelites were delivered from
Egypt. This illustrates, in many ways, the experience of the
Christian in being delivered from the domain of sin and
redeemed by the death of Christ. Exodus is extremely im-
portant to the non-Christian who desires to learn how he
may be redeemed. It is valuable in strengthening the under-
standing of the Christian as he looks back over the marvel-
ous salvation which the Lord has given him. This crucial
event in the life of every Christian is strikingly typified in
Exodus by the Passover, with its shedding of the blood of
the lamb without spot or blemish, and the placing of the
blood of the lamb on the lintel of the door. Nevertheless,
for the Christian, all of this represents something that is al-
ready in the past. Vital and important as it is for him, it
is the background of his present life rather than the situa-
tion which he now faces.

CHRISTIAN APPLICATION OF "NUMBERS"

The Book of Numbers, however, describes the journey of
people who have already been redeemed and delivered from
Egypt, as they went their way toward the promised land.
It exactly corresponds to the situation of the Christian in
this age. He has been redeemed through the blood of Christ.
He has left Egypt. He has been brought out from the control
of the powers of sin and of darkness. However, he has not
yet entered the promised land. There is still a rest awaiting
the people of God, a rest toward which we are pushing forward. The Christian is on a pilgrim journey. He is pressing forward to the great prize ahead of him. This was exactly the situation of the Israelites in the Book of Numbers. No other book of the Old Testament contains so much that is exactly parallel to the pilgrim journey of the Christian in the present age.

A correct understanding on this point can be of real value for every Christian. Many a Christian thinks of himself as back in the experience described in the early part of Exodus. He is constantly worrying about his past sins, fretting about whether he really is a child of God or not. He needs to realize that if he has truly looked to Christ for salvation and been born again by simple faith in Him, he has been delivered from Egypt and is now a child of God, headed for the promised land. He needs to learn to possess the possessions which God has given him, and to rejoice in them. He must never forget that his sins are under the blood; Jesus has died for him; the transaction is completed; he is now launched on his pilgrim journey.

Other Christians tend to make the opposite mistake. They think themselves to be already in the promised land. This can lead to an exaggerated idea of the extent of one's sanctification, or to undue discouragement along the way. We need to realize that we are pilgrims, and that this world is still Satan's territory. We must constantly look to Christ for protection and guidance. The Book of Numbers is the book that typifies our present situation. All through it we find illustrations marvelously planned to show us what we need.

The Christian, then, needs to study this wonderful book. In its first part, 1:1 to 10:10, he reads of the preparation of the Israelites for their wilderness journey. All of this is meaningful for his own life. It shows the orderliness, separation from uncleanness, and constant reliance on divine protection and leadership, which are so vital if he is to go forward in his pilgrim journey.

The actual journey begins in 10:11, and the plains of
Moab are reached in 22:1. These chapters are full of lessons for us (cf. 1 Cor, 10:1-11). In the mistakes and rebellions of the Israelites we see the very errors into which we ourselves may fall, if we fail to keep our eyes fixed on our Leader. At every stage the divine provision for nourishment and protection is wonderfully illustrated, typifying the supernatural assistance so necessary for our own pilgrim journey.

The Balaam incident (22:2-25:18) is rather unique, and yet it illustrates the type of spiritual opposition which we must face, and shows how capably our Lord can turn back the clever plans of Satan to destroy us.

In the final section of Numbers, the promised land is just ahead. Israel is forbidden to settle where it is. Plans must be laid for entering Canaan. The Christian, also, must not become satisfied with the present age. He is a citizen of another kingdom, and must always keep this in mind. Detailed study of this part of the book shows that it, like the earlier section, is filled with lessons that we need to ponder and to heed.

What a shame that an ill-chosen title should have hindered Christians from receiving the many rich blessings and important lessons which God has placed in this marvelous fourth book of the Bible!

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
READING HEB 6:4-6 IN LIGHT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

DAVE MATHEWSON

I. Introduction

Perhaps the most significant, yet perplexing, feature of the book of Hebrews is the so-called warning passages which dot its literary landscape (2:1-4; 3:7-4:13; 5:11-6:12; 10:19-39; 12:14, 29). While all of these warning passages have elicited a variety of commentary and discussion, Heb 6:4-6 has attracted most of the scholarly attention and remains one of the most puzzling and enigmatic for interpreters.¹ The bulk of attention devoted to these verses has focused on the issues of the precise identification of the status of those in vv. 4-5 and the nature of the sin they have committed in v. 6. Therefore, scholars continue to debate whether the subjects of the warning are genuine members of the faith community, who through falling away (v. 6) subsequently lose this status, or whether this falling away only results in the loss of rewards, or whether failure to persevere is evidence that the initial faith was not genuine in the first place, or whether the passage should be understood at a corporate level, addressing the covenant community.

rather than individuals. One of the most insightful studies to appear in recent years is the article by Scot McKnight, who surveys and interacts with a variety of approaches to the interpretation of this passage. McKnight provides a fresh, detailed formal analysis of 6:4-6 and the other warning passages in Hebrews, suggesting that the warning passages, especially 6:4-6, should be read synthetically in relationship to one another rather than individually. Based on his analysis McKnight concludes that the warnings address the sin of apostasy, and that although believers experience the reality of salvation in the present, a failure to persevere to the end can result in the cessation of that reality.

In this article I do not wish to solve all the problems engendered by Heb 6:4-6. Rather, the purpose of the present article is to suggest a further element that has not yet sufficiently been considered in interpreting this section of Hebrews in hopes of providing fresh exegetical insight into understanding this puzzling passage. More specifically, I wish to propose reading Heb 6:4-6 in light of an OT background. In fact, I would contend that much misunderstanding of this section of Hebrews stems from a failure to appreciate its OT matrix.

Hermeneutically, one of the most significant observations for interpreting Heb 6:4-6 has been articulated by McKnight. As mentioned above, the warning passages in Hebrews should not be read in strict isolation from one another, as is frequently the case, but should be read synthetically. McKnight helpfully suggests that formally each warning is comprised of four basic components that provide a basis for comparison with the other warnings: audience, sin, exhortation, and consequences. Based on this observation, a key feature comes into play which points to a neglected element in interpreting 6:4-6. Scholars have frequently noticed that one of the common features of the warning passages in Hebrews is that each exhibits an OT example to illustrate the warning in question. The following comparison displays the warnings found in Hebrews along with the corresponding OT examples contained in each warning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Warning</th>
<th>OT Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2:1-4</td>
<td>2:2 - disobedience to the Mosaic law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:7-4:13</td>
<td>3:16-19; 4:2 - the failure at Kadesh-barnea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:19-39</td>
<td>10:28 - disobedience to the Mosaic law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:14-29</td>
<td>12:16-17 - the failure of Esau; 12:25-26 - failure to listen to God's voice at Sinai.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


3 "Warning Passages."

4 Ibid., 22-23.

5 Ibid., 27-29. McKnight suggests the significance of this observation: "I will propose that a synthesis of each component as revealed in each warning passage provides clarity on the meaning of a given component in a single passage" (26).
Consequently, in addition to McKnight's enumeration of four components of *audience, sin, exhortation* and *consequences* which comprise the warning passages, I would suggest a fifth component: *OT example.*

The only exception to this pattern, however, appears to be 6:4-6. Thus, Paul Ellingworth observes that "This passage [5:11-6:12] is almost as remarkable for what it does not say as for what it does. Like 3:7-4:13, it contains only passing mention of Christ (6:1, 6), but unlike the earlier passage, it is *not based on any Old Testament passage either:* The writer is appealing to his readers in his own words." Philip Edgcumbe Hughes admits that "the calamitous history of the Israelites of old is repeatedly set before the readers as a warning against the imitation of their evil example (2:lf; 3:12ff.; 4:1f., 11; 10:28ff.; 12:25ff.) . . .," but Hughes does not include a reference to the warning in 5:11-6:12. In his detailed and thorough analysis of the warnings in Hebrews, McKnight makes no mention of any OT illustration in 6:4-6. The recent discussion of the OT background to Hebrews by R. T. France proposes that an exposition of Psalm 110 more broadly underlies Heb 5:5-7:28, although this does not help us arrive at an answer to the question of whether an OT illustration illuminates 6:4-6 in particular. More recently, George H. Guthrie has discussed the use of the OT in Hebrews. Yet despite the extensive nature of Guthrie's list of OT parallels for Hebrews, no OT parallels are given for 6:4-6.9

However, I would propose that, like the other warnings in Hebrews, a specific OT example can also be detected in the warning of 6:4-6, and that this constitutes one of the keys to interpreting this warning. More specifically, behind 6:4-6 lies a reference to the wilderness generation and the Kadesh-barnea incident (cf. Numbers 13-14; Psalm 95) which featured prominently in the warning in 3:7-4:13. In a footnote in his insightful commentary on Hebrews, F. F. Bruce briefly entertained the possibility that in 6:4-6 "the wilderness narrative [the failure of the Israelites to enter Canaan] is still in our author's mind," although he fails to offer any substantiation for his brief

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7 *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 216.


assertion or tease out the possible hermeneutical implications. This present article will attempt to give further substantiation and shape to this suggestion and briefly explore some of the implications of reading this warning in light of this proposed OT background.

II. The OT Background for 3:7-4:13

The exhortation articulated in 6:4-6 follows on the heels of a previous, lengthy warning embedded in chaps. 3-4; therefore this section requires brief analysis in order to provide the context for the ensuing discussion. In the second warning given in Heb 3:7-4:13 the Kadesh-barnea incident from Numbers 13-14 is recalled via Psalm 95 (94):7b-11, which the writer of Hebrews quotes in 3:7-11 and repeatedly recalls in 3:15; 4:3, 5, 7, as the basis for his exhortation to his readers not to become hardened to the promise of salvation. According to the Numbers 14 narrative, the Israelites were camped at Kadesh-barnea, prepared to enter the land of Canaan which constituted the goal of their Exodus from Egypt (cf. Exod 3:8; 6:4; Num 13:1). However, because of unbelief and hard hearts the wilderness generation refused to enter the promised land, and consequently incurred God's wrath (Num 14:11-12). Psalm 95 recalls and interprets Israel's rebellion and unbelief in the wilderness from Numbers 14, an event which became paradigmatic of Israel's disobedience, as a warning not to emulate the catastrophe at Kadesh-barnea. The writer of Hebrews appropriates Psalm 95 in order to place the same warning before the new covenant community not to rebel and refuse the promise of rest which lay before them as a present reality (cf. Shemer, Heb 3:13; 4:7). According to Ceslas Spicq, the comparison between Israel under the Mosaic covenant and the new covenant community presupposes an exact correspondence between the successive generations of the people of God. . . . Israel and Christians exhibit a certain symmetrical relationship, as it were, designed by God. They are recipients of the same promises, they

10 The Epistle to the Hebrews (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 120 n. 38. See also implicitly Grudem, "Perseverance of the Saints," The Grace of God, 160-61.
12 See Lane, Hebrews 1-8, 85. Cf. Deut 1:19-35; Neh 9:15-17; Ps 106:21-27; CD 3:6-9; Ps-Phil, Bib. Ant. 15; 4 Ezra 7:106; 1 Cor 10:5-10. Psalm 95 also recalls Israel's rebellion at Meribah and Massah from Exod 17:1-7, although the climax of Israel's rebellion is the Kadesh-barnea incident from Numbers 14.
go through analogous trials, they are exposed to the same dangers of apostasy, they are exhorted to the same faithfulness, in identical terms.\textsuperscript{13} Thus, the relationship between the old and new people of God in Hebrews is a typological one, where the experience of the wilderness generation in Num 14 (cf. Ps 95) is recapitulated in and finds its climax in the situation of the new people of God, the new Israel, in Heb 3:7-4:13.\textsuperscript{14} The story of the wilderness generation in the Mosaic era, then, becomes the story of the new community and the focal lens through which they are to view their experience. This assumption underlies the direct application of the Ps 95 text to the present community in Hebrews.\textsuperscript{15} Further, that the wilderness generation plays a crucial role beyond 3:7-4:13 can be deduced from the fact that the tabernacle, rather than the temple, provides the predominant model for the author of Hebrews (8:5; 9:1-10),\textsuperscript{16} and exodus typology is confirmed more broadly with the emphasis on the incident at Sinai (12:18-21, 25, 29) and the comparison between Moses and Christ (3:1-6).

\textbf{III. The OT Background to Heb 6:4-6}

Perhaps one of the basic reasons for the hesitancy to find an OT background for 6:4-6 is the propensity of scholars to focus attention principally on citations and explicit OT references. However, recent research into the use of the OT in the NT more generally has pointed to the importance of giving due attention to allusions and echoes and more implicit and subtle uses of Scripture.\textsuperscript{17} For those whose ears are attuned to the OT, even a

\textsuperscript{14} Enns, "The Interpretation of Psalm 95," \textit{Early Christian Interpretation}.
\textsuperscript{15} See also Ibid., 352-53. For the typological relationship of the people of God in the Old and New Testaments more generally see L. Goppelt, \textit{Typos} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982). Moreover, in keeping with the typological nature of the analogy, the comparison between the wilderness generation and the new community in Heb 3:7-4:13 is \textit{a fortiori} ("if ..., how much more"). In other words, if the wilderness generation incurred the wrath of God for refusal to enter the promised land under the Mosaic era, how much more will the people of God in the new era not escape God's wrath for refusal to appropriate God's promises as they stand on the verge of their fulfillment. This \textit{a fortiori} logic clearly underlies 2:2-3; 10:28-29; 12:25.
\textsuperscript{16} There has been some discussion over why the author appeals to the tabernacle rather than the temple for his primary model. While this could indicate that the temple is no longer standing when Hebrews was written (based on the recent work of Stanley E. Porter, \textit{Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament, with Reference to Tense and Mood} [Studies in Biblical Greek I; New York: Peter Lang, 1989], it can no longer be maintained on the basis of the use of the present tense in the writer's description of the cultus that the temple is still standing), a better explanation emerges from the observation that the author employs the wilderness motif throughout Hebrews. Given the prominence of the wilderness motif the author has employed the wilderness tabernacle as his dominant model to depict God's dwelling place in the OT in order to provide a contrast to the heavenly tabernacle.
\textsuperscript{17} See the discussions in Richard B. Hays, \textit{Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul} (New Haven & London, 1989); Brian S. Rosner, \textit{Paul, Scripture and Ethics: A Study of 1 Corinthians 5-7} (AGJU,
single word or two can activate scriptural texts in the readers’ memory. In addition to alluding to specific texts, authors can sometimes develop Old Testament concepts or themes which find expression in several OT texts. According to William Lane, in Hebrews “Every chapter is marked by explicit or implicit references to the biblical text.” I would contend that the author's language in 6:4-6 is colored by OT references by means of allusion and echo apart from direct citation. Initial justification for finding OT influence behind 6:4-6, especially with reference to the wilderness generation, includes: 1) this era from the life of Israel has already played a prominent role in the exhortation of 3:7-4:13; 2) this aspect of Israel's life serves as a model throughout Hebrews more broadly; 3) as already observed, an OT illustration can be detected behind all the other major warnings in Hebrews. Further substantiation comes from observing the linguistic and conceptual parallels in the descriptive phrases in 6:4-6 (“having once for all been enlightened,” "having tasted the heavenly gift," "having become partakers of the Holy Spirit," "having tasted of the good word of God and the powers of the coming age") with descriptions of the wilderness generation found in the OT, associations which "bleed over" from 3:7-4:13 into 6:4-6. Most
of the parallels to the statements in 6:4-6 can be discovered in Exodus and Numbers with their descriptions of the people as they traveled through the wilderness on their way to Canaan, as well as in Nehemiah 9 (esp. vv. 13-15, 19-21) and in related Psalms, where the history of God's dealing with Israel is rehearsed in somewhat extended fashion.22

I. 6:4a

Commentators frequently draw attention to plausible NT parallels for the phrase "having once been enlightened," and several have suggested a baptismal reference for this description.23 However, the following considerations and analysis suggest that more attention needs to be paid to the possible light that the OT might shed on the interpretation of this phrase. Given the prominence of the wilderness generation as a model for the author, the most important parallel is the light that God provided for the wilderness generation in the desert. According to Exod 13:21, as the Israelites traveled through the desert following their deliverance from Egypt, along with a pillar of cloud during the day, God provided them with a pillar of fire to enlighten their way at night. This specific event is recalled in Nehemiah 9 in a section in which the author recites what God did for his people on their trek from Egypt through the desert (v. 12), a section which offers several important linguistic and conceptual parallels to Heb 6:4-6. This event is also referred to in Ps 105 (104):39, which is situated in a catalogue of God's mighty actions on behalf of the Israelites. With this "wilderness generation" background in mind, it appears that this aspect of the Exodus narrative has provided a primary impetus for the author's conception here, a proposal that receives further corroboration when the subsequent statements in vv. 4-5 are examined. The author's reference to "enlightenment" here probably corresponds to 10:26: "we have received knowledge of the truth" (cf. v. 32).24

22 Nehemiah 9 constitutes a prayer by the Levites which recites the history of Israel in terms of their apostasy. The idea behind Neh 9:16-25 is that God continues to sustain his blessings upon Israel despite their rebellion. Cf. David J. A. Clines, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther* (NCBC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans/London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1984), 195.


2. 6:4b

The second phrase in the repertoire of statements in 6:4-6, "having tasted the heavenly gift," also resonates with overtones from the wilderness incident. Although the verbal parallels are not as precise as the previous instance, for those whose ears were attuned to the OT background, this phrase, which occurs only here in the NT, would have recalled the manna which God provided from heaven for his people during their sojourn in the wilderness. According to Exod 16:4, God would rain bread down from heaven for the Israelites' sustenance in response to their grumbling over their perceived misfortune in comparison to what they had in Egypt (cf. 16:31, 33, 35; Num 11:7-9; Deut 8:3, 16). This provision of "heavenly bread" became important for subsequent articulations of God's intervention on behalf of his covenant people, and is explicitly recalled in the historical recital of Ps 105 (104):40. In rehearsing the events following the incident at Sinai, Neh 9 also draws on this description of heavenly bread which God gave to his covenant people (9:15; cf. v. 20). Further, along with the Nehemiah 9 reference, in Exod 16:15 and Ps 78 (77):24 the bread is described as something which the Lord gave (LXX εδώκεν) to his people to eat, suggesting that the bread is a divine gift. Moreover, according to later exegetical traditions there was an expectation of a second, eschatological provision of bread from heaven corresponding to God's provision in the past (2 Bar. 29:8; Eccl. R. 1:9; Sib. Or. 7:145).25 Thus, along with the Exodus narrative, the retrospective lists noted above, which include mention of the provision of heavenly bread as a gift from God to the wilderness generation, provide plausible parallels to the writer's second statement in Heb 6:4, where the readers have “tasted the heavenly gift" in the age of eschatological fulfillment.26 While the reference to "tasting" may suggest a Eucharistic setting,27

25 See Johannes Behm, "αἰτομον," TDNT, I, 477-78; Rudolf Meyer, "Μαννα," TDNT, IV, 463-65. This may be linked with the idea that the manna was hidden in the ark before the destruction of the temple, and that it would be revealed in the last days (cf. 2 Macc 2:4-7; 2 Bar 6:6-7).

26 See also Wis 16:20: καὶ ετοιμὸν αἰτόμον αἰτόμον αἰτόμον· ἀρ sólo. . . For the spiritual interpretation of the bread from heaven cf. also John 6:31, 32, 33, 41, 50, 51, 58, where the manna is interpreted as Jesus and issues in eternal life. Thus, Christ surpasses the OT manna given in the wilderness. Cf. also Rev 2: 17. Jewish teachers sometimes identified the manna as the Torah. cr. Philo, Mut. 253-63; Mek. Exod 13: 17.

27 See G. Wesley Buchanan, To the Hebrews (AB, 36; Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1972), 106, who thinks it refers to the communal meal.
this overlooks the metaphorical sense of the term which may simply indicate more broadly “the whole sum of spiritual blessings" experienced by the readers.  

Furthermore, with this proposed OT context still in mind, the author's third descriptive statement, "having become partakers of the Holy Spirit," sustains the continuous allusion to the experience of God's people in the wilderness. According to Neh 9:20, part of the experience of the people as they wandered in the wilderness was the reception of the gift of God's Spirit to instruct them (συνετίθησαν αὐτοῖς). This reference probably reflects Num 11:16-29, a text which contains several references to God's Spirit which rests upon certain members of the covenant people. Following the Israelites' departure from Sinai, in response to Moses' lament due to the grumbling of the people, in Numbers 11 God assures Moses that he will not have to carry the burden of the people alone (v. 17). Thus, God will take the Spirit which is upon Moses and place it upon the seventy elders of Israel who subsequently prophesied (11:17, 25). Further, both Eldad and Medad are singled out as recipients of the Spirit and they likewise prophesy (II:26). Along with the mention of the deliverance at the Red Sea, this reference to God's provision of the Holy Spirit finds its place in a recital of what God did for the Israelites in the prophetic literature in Isa 63:11c, where God set his Holy Spirit among the people in the days of Moses, most likely a recollection of the incident in Numbers 11 (cf. Hag 2:5). Within the broader context of Israel's wilderness experience the author's statement regarding the experience of becoming partakers of the Holy Spirit in Heb 6:4c, then, has been anchored in the OT conception of God's provision of the Holy Spirit for the wilderness generation. The readers of Hebrews have experienced the work of the Spirit in their midst, perhaps more specifically with reference to the gift of prophecy (cf. Num 11:26) and the "signs and wonders" which accompanied the proclamation of the Gospel and the in-breaking of the age to come (cf. 2:4; 6:5b).

28 Bruce, Hebrews, 121. Likewise, Westcott, Hebrews, 148.
Heb 6:4c  Neh 9:20
metoxouj genhqemtaj tou pneumataj a[giu pneumo[a sou to[a]qon e@wkaj

4. 6:5

The next descriptive phrase in 6:5 contains two expressions ("the good word of God;" "the powers of the coming age") which function as the dual object of the verb geusamenoj, a term which has already occurred in the second descriptive phrase in 6:4 in allusion to God's provision of bread from heaven for the wilderness generation. Although some commentators have pointed to the ostensible parallel in 1 Pet 2:3 (eijeguesas qeoti xrhstope[k kurioj), an allusion to Ps 34 (33):9, as Ellingworth rightly notes, the language and respective contexts of 1 Peter (cf. Ps 34:9) and Hebrews are substantially different. The concept of God's word being sweet to the taste is found several places in the OT (cf. Ezek 2:8; 3:1-3; Psalm 119 [118:34]). However, it is also plausible that the allusion to the bread from heaven which God provided the people in the wilderness and which featured in the second description above in 6:4 continues to influence the reference to the "tasting" here.

The referent of rhma qeou? is probably the word which was preached to the covenant community and confirmed by signs and wonders in 2:1-4. (The term rhma is characteristic of the author of Hebrews, occurring three other times in 1:3, 11:3, and 12:19. This last reverence is intriguing since it constitutes a reference to the word of God given to Moses at Sinai (cf. Acts 7:38: logia zwnta). In Exod 20:1 God speaks the words of the law to Moses, which Moses was subsequently commanded to communicate to the people (v. 22). According to the historical recital in Nehemiah 9, on Sinai God spoke to the people from heaven, giving them good commands (v. 13, LXX ehtola[qa]. Moreover, as other commentators have suggested, linguistically, a closer parallel to Heb 6:5a exists in Josh 21:45 (21:43) and 23:14. Both of these Old Testament texts provide statements which follow upon the conquest of the land of Canaan, and reaffirm that God has kept

30 Ellingworth remarks, "But the language of the present verse is too distinctive to suggest a direct reference to Ps 34; the common tradition is probably oral. Moreover, the situation in 1 Peter is that of 'babes' (2:2) coming from baptism and thereby taking their place for the first time (nu?n, v. 10) among God's people; whereas in Hebrews, the addressees are people who should be moving beyond spiritual infancy (5:12), and are in danger of losing their place among God's people if they do not hold on" (Hebrews, 321).
31 Ellingworth, Hebrews, 321. Ellingworth doubts that one can maintain a sharp distinction here between logoj; and rhma. Cf. 12: 19. McKnight is mistaken to see the use of rhma in 6:5 as one of the differences from 1 Pet 2:3, since 1 Pet 2:3 does not contain the term logoj (see "Warning Passages," 47)
32 Cf. Grasser, Die Hebraer, 352; Hughes, Hebrews, 210 n. 54; Buchanan, Hebrews, 106-7.
all his promises in bringing the people into the promised land. Most likely, these references to the good words of God, including the words which were spoken by God at Sinai, provide the scriptural matrix for the author's assertion in Heb 6:5a.\(^{33}\) Like the old covenant community, the new community addressed by the author of Hebrews have tasted the good word of God, the Gospel which has been preached to them within the context of the Christian community (cf. 2:4).

**Heb 6:5a**

\[kαλὸν γεύσασθαι \ ζηκίαν\]

Josh 21:43 (LXX)

\[παρὰ \ θεῷ \ θαύμα \ τὰ \ καλά\]

Josh 23:14

\[παρὰ \ τὰ \ θαύματα \ τὰ \ καλά\]

Neh 9:13

\[καὶ \ ἐπιταλά ἀγαθάκα\]


The final descriptive phrase asserts that the readers have tasted the powers (\(dυναμεῖ\)) of the coming age (6:5b). Intratextually, the closest parallel to 6:5b is 2:4, where the message of salvation which was heard by the readers was testified by "signs, wonders and various miracles" (\(σ χ ημείδις \ τε καὶ \ τερασιν \ και \ ποίκικαι \ dυναμεῖ\)).\(^{34}\) This same threefold expression occurs elsewhere in the NT in Acts 2:22 with reference to the verification of Christ and his message, and the fixed twofold form of the expression, \(σ \ ήμειά \ kαὶ \ τερατα\), characterizes the ministry of the apostles in Acts.\(^{35}\) However, the principal scriptural background for the phrase in Heb 2:4 is the use of these terms in depicting the miraculous events surrounding the Exodus, especially since neglect of the Gospel in 2:3 is explicitly compared to disobedience to the Mosaic legislation which was given at Sinai (2:2). In the OT the epithet "signs and wonders" often carried specific semantic associations, being frequently associated with the events surrounding the Exodus and the wilderness generation (cf. Exod 7:3: \(tα \ σ ήμειά \ <\ ... \ kαὶ \ τερατα\)). According to Karl Hein Rengstorf, "When the OT speaks of God's signs and wonders ... the reference is almost always to the leading of the people out of Egypt by Moses and to the special circumstances under which the people stood up to the passage of the Red Sea and in all of which God proved Himself to be the almighty and showed Israel to be His chosen people."\(^{36}\) Moreover, "in the LXX the formula \(σ \ ήμειά \ kαὶ \ τερατα\ ... seems to be reserved for God's wonders in the days of Moses."\(^{37}\) Thus, the "signs and wonders"

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\(^{34}\) Ellingworth notes the close link between 2:1-4 and 6:4-6 (*Hebrews*, 142).


\(^{36}\) Karl Heinrich Rengstorf, "\(σ \ ήμειάν\)," *TDNT*, VII, 216.

\(^{37}\) Ibid., 221. Cf. also O Hofius, "\(σ \ ήμειάν\)," *NIDNTT*, 2, 626-27. According to Hofius, the phrase "'signs and wonders' is found primarily in those texts which describe the time of Moses as a time of Yahweh's marvellous actions in history (Exod 7:3; cf. Deut 4:34; 6:22; 7:19; 29:2; Jer 32:20f.; Pss 78[77]:43; 105[104]:27; 135[134]:9; Neh 9: 10; also Bar 2: 11; Wis 10:16)" (627).
which accompanied and accredited God's speaking in the Gospel are seen in analogy to the "signs and wonders" which confirmed God's presence with and his speaking to his first covenant people.

It is this reference to the "signs and wonders" which accompanied God's activity in Egypt and beyond which grounds the writer's articulation of the experience of the powers of the age to come in the new covenant community in Heb 6:5b. The employment of 

\[ \text{dunamij} \]

links 6:5 closely to 2:4, which is clearly patterned after Exodus events. Moreover, several OT texts which recall the events surrounding the Exodus depict those events with 

\[ \text{dunastei} \]

(Exod 7:4; Psg 66 [65]:3; 77 [76]:15; cf. 

\[ \text{dunastei} \]

in 78 [77]:4, 26; 106 [105]:8). Therefore, like the wilderness generation who experienced God's mighty acts and miraculous powers, (cf. Exod 7:3; Deut 11:3; Num 14:11,22; Psg 78:4, 11, 32, 43; 105:27; 106:21-22; cf. Acts 7:36), within the context of the new covenant community the subjects of Heb 6:5 have witnessed and experienced the miraculous powers of God, the in-breaking of the eschatological powers of the age to come (Heb 6:5b; 2:4).

\[ \text{Heb 6:5c} \]

See Exod 7:3, 4; Num 14:11, 22; Ps 66 (65):3; 77 (76):15; 78 (77):4, 26, 43; 106 (105):8; cf. Acts 7:36; Heb 2:4

Following this extended description of the readers' experience in vv. 4-5, verse 6 describes the error that the readers are in danger of committing: 

\[ \text{parapesonmataj} \]. According to Lane, in the LXX this term refers to "a total attitude reflecting deliberate and calculated renunciation of God." The potential danger facing the readers of Hebrews corresponds precisely to that which the wilderness generation faced. The wilderness generation had experienced all these things (God's good word, provisions and miraculous powers), yet they responded in unbelief and rebellion (Num 14:11,22; Pss 95:8-9; 106:21-22; Heb. 3:16), and subsequently incurred God's wrath. Likewise the subjects of Heb 6:4-5 had experienced all these things (vv. 4-5) as members of the new covenant community, and now had rebelled and fallen away as their ancestors once did.

Cf. Acts 7:36 where the phrase is used of the miraculous events at Egypt, the Red Sea, and the forty years in the desert.

\[ \text{38} \]

Buchanan likewise sees the "powers of the age to come" here in 6:5b as a reference to the miracles which accompanied entry into the promised land (Hebrews, 107). However, Buchanan wrongly construes this as an entrance into the literal promised land in 6:5b. \[ \text{39} \]

Hebrews 1-8, 142. Lane cites Ezek 20:27; 22:4; Wis 6:9; 12:2. According to McKnight, the "sin the author has in mind is a willful rejection of God and his Son" Jesus the Messiah, and open denunciation of God and his ethical standards" ("Warning Passages," 39). Elsewhere McKnight labels it as "apostasy" (42). Contra the view of Oberholtzer, "Warning Passages 3," 322-23.

\[ \text{40} \]

Cf. Spicq, L'Epitre, 71-72. The wilderness generation and the present readers "sont exposes aux memes dangers d'apostasie" (72).
6. Heb 6:7-8

The allusion to the wilderness generation proposed above extends beyond vv. 4-6 to vv. 7-8. The situation envisioned in 6:4-6 is proceeded by an explanation or illustration (γάρ) in vv. 7-8. The explanation here does not just draw on common agricultural imagery for illustrative purposes, but more specifically alludes to the OT, an observation significant for perceiving the function of these verses. The language of 6:7 clearly echoes the LXX of Deut 11:11.41

Heb 6:7: γῆ γὰρ ἔχει τὸν οὐρανὸν πηγάζοντα πολλὰ καὶ οὐκ ἕχειν
Deut 11:11: γῆ... ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ πηγάζεται

Essentially, the context of Deut 11 is the affirmation of God's requirements for his people if they are, to enjoy blessings in the land they are about to enter. The description in v. 11 of the land that drinks rain is descriptive of the promised land (γῆ). But the enjoyment of blessings in the land and continual rain to cause the land to produce is conditioned upon the stipulation of the people's obedience (vv. 13-15). Conversely, failure to obey God's commandments will result in the rain being withheld, and the people will perish (vv. 16-17). This is all part of the covenantal blessing (εὐλογία) and cursing (καταραί) motif which pervades this entire section (v. 26).

Moreover, the broader context of Deuteronomy 11 suggests the appropriateness of an allusion to 11:11 in Heb 6:7-8. The covenantal blessing and cursing on the land is placed within the context of the Exodus from Egypt and the subsequent trek through the wilderness. In Deut 11:2-7, the generation which stands on the verge of entry into the promised land is, in solidarity with their ancestors, enjoined to remember the events they experienced surrounding the Exodus out of Egypt (vv. 2-4), as well as what God did for them in the wilderness (v. 5), as a basis for obedience and subsequent blessing on the land. Therefore, the allusion to Deut 11:11 in Heb 6:7-8 continues the wilderness generation motif developed in this section.

The clear allusion to Deut 11:11 in Heb 6:7 and the mention of both blessing (εὐλογία, v. 7) and cursing (καταρά, v. 8) would evoke in the readers' canonical memory the covenantal blessing and cursing from Deuteronomy 11 (cf. v. 26).42 The "land which drinks rain" in 6:7 resumes the divine provisions experienced by the covenant community in vv. 4-6. Like the people in Deut 11 who witnessed divine provisions during the Exodus and the time of wilderness wandering and will now experience God's provision in the land, the readers of Hebrews 6 have experienced the blessings of vv. 4-6 by virtue of belonging to the new covenant community. Those members of the...
new covenant community who experience the things articulated in vv. 4-6 and produce fruit of faith and obedience will receive blessing from God, which corresponds to the covenantal blessing on the land in Deut 11:13-15, 27. Conversely, those who experience the same things by virtue of participating in the covenant community but fail to appropriate these blessings and obey will be cursed, corresponding to the covenantal curse in Deut 11:16-17, 28. However, for the new covenant community the promises of physical blessing and cursing on the land have been spiritualized to refer to ultimate salvation or judgment. The context of entry into the land (ὁ οὐρανός) that drinks rain in Deuteronomy 11 also provides a further connection with Heb 3:7-4:13, where the warning against failure to enter God's rest was based on the failure of the wilderness generation to enter rest in the promised land (Numbers 14; Psalm 95). The allusion to Deut 11:11 in Heb 6:7-8, then, sustains the author's allusion to the wilderness generation developed in chaps. 3-4. More significantly, the clear allusion to Deut 11:11 in vv. 7-8 places the allusions/echoes from the wilderness generation proposed for vv. 4-6 on firmer footing.

IV Implications of the Old Testament Background for Interpreting Heb 6:4-6

The preceding analysis has attempted to show contextually and linguistically that the Old Testament experience of the wilderness generation and the incident at Kadesh-barnea provide the model for the author's depiction of the subjects of Heb 6:4-6, and that such an analysis yields important semantic results. While perhaps none of the proposed allusions are entirely convincing on their own, when taken together the cumulative evidence and the clear allusion to Deut 11:11 in Heb 6:7-8 provide a compelling case for reading 6:4-6 in light of the proposed Old Testament background. Thus, the momentum from the use of this illustration in 3:7-4:13 has carried over into the author's statements in 6:4-6.

The author's primary "intertextual" quarry is the narrative accounts from Exodus and Numbers 13-14, overlaid with the lists from Nehemiah 9 and Psalms which recount what God did on behalf of his people. While a case could be made for finding clear allusions to specific Old Testament texts in some of the descriptions in Heb 6:4-6 (vv. 4a, 5, 7), several other instances seem to exhibit less precise verbal correspondences, but are allusions to concepts or themes found in several texts, while nevertheless carrying meaning from the OT into their new context (vv. 4b, 4c, 6).

What semantic effects are produced by the author's allusion to and echo of the Israelites' wilderness saga? In other words, what difference does discerning the scriptural substructure of Heb 6:4-6 make in actually reading

43 The *tiktous a botamhn* in v. 7b also reflects the *gh? . . . botamhn* of Gen 1:11.
44 The *a[kamqaj kai]tribokouj* in v. 8 also reflects the *a[kamqaj kai]tribokouj* of Gen 3:17.
this passage? Through influence of OT descriptions of the wilderness generation, the author intends for the readers to perceive their situation in light of this precursor event in Israel's history. One of the important ways in which OT allusions and echoes function is to create a conceptual or semantic grid through which reality is perceived. According to Michael Fishbane, the Exodus event “became a lens of historical perception and anticipation.”\(^{45}\) Thus, the author of Hebrews defines the readers' situation in terms of the experience of the Israelites as they wandered in the wilderness on their way to the promised land. Like their OT counterparts, the audience of Hebrews is also on a pilgrimage to the promised land and stands on the threshold of the fulfillment of God's promises. In typological analogy to the old covenant community, the subjects of vv. 4-5 have also experienced God's goodness and blessings: they have "been enlightened," have "tasted the heavenly gift," have become "partakers of the Holy Spirit," have "tasted the good word of God and the powers of the coming age" (Heb 6:4-5), all of which they have experienced by virtue of belonging to the covenant community.\(^{46}\) However, like their OT predecessors, they have fallen away (v. 6) and have come under the covenantal curse (vv. 7-8), having experienced the blessings of the new covenant inaugurated by Christ. Rhetorically, the OT language in this unit functions to dissuade the readers from following the same course of action as their old covenant counterparts.

Similar to the comparison in Heb 2:1-4; 3:7-4:13 the argument in 6:4-6 is implicitly \textit{a fortiori}. If the wilderness generation committed a grave error by experiencing all these blessings under the old covenant and then rebelling in unbelief, how much more serious is the situation for those who in the new era of fulfillment experience all these things in 6:4-5 and then fall away (vv. 6, 7-8). Consequently, the author is not just alluding to snippets of texts and isolated vocabulary for rhetorical color, but by alluding to texts which belong to a larger matrix of ideas he is evoking the entire context and story of Israel's experience in the wilderness. In this way the story of the old covenant community becomes the story of the new covenant community as they live in the era of the fulfillment of God's new covenant promises.\(^{47}\) The description in 6:4-6, then, is not just of an isolated Christian experience, rather, it is to be understood against the background of Israel's wilderness experience as members of the covenant community. In light of this, it is


\(^{46}\) Although the proposal of Verbrugge ("New Interpretation") that 6:4-6 concerns not individuals but the covenant community is probably to be rejected (see McKnight, "Warning Passages," 53-54), he has rightly highlighted the communal dimension of these verses.

possible that the descriptions in vv. 4-5 are not to be pinned down to precise referents as most commentators attempt to do, but all refer more generally to the experience of the people in hearing the Gospel and experiencing the blessings of the new covenant within the context of the new covenant community.  

What the readers have experienced as part of the new Exodus community is to be interpreted in terms of what the first Exodus generation experienced on their way to the promised land.

More importantly, the above analysis sheds some valuable light on the vexing question of the status of those envisioned in Heb 6:4-6. After analyzing the statements in vv. 4-6, McKnight confidently concludes that "[i]f the author is accurate in his description of the readers' experience, then we can only say that they are believers-true believers." However, the preceding analysis leads us in a different direction. It appears that in analogy to the old covenant community the people depicted in 6:4-6 are not genuine believers or true members of the new covenant community. Like their OT counterparts, they have experienced all these blessings (vv. 4-5), but like the wilderness generation they are hardhearted, rebellious (3:8) and possess an "evil heart of unbelief" (3:12, 19). More clearly, 4:2 poignantly states that both groups (the wilderness generation and the new covenant community) have had the gospel preached to them, but the wilderness generation to which the readers of Hebrews are compared failed to believe, and therefore the message was of no value to them. Thus, the conclusion of Lane that "[t]ogether, the clauses describe vividly the reality of the experience of personal salvation enjoyed by the Christians addressed" is premature. Wayne A. Grudem has recently proposed a similar understanding to the one presented in this section. According to him, the descriptive phrases themselves in vv. 4-6 are inconclusive as to whether the subjects are genuine believers or not. Here in Hebrews 6 they describe “people who were not yet Christians but who had simply heard the gospel and had experienced several of the blessings of the Holy Spirit's work in the Christian community." The falling away (v. 6) is not a falling from salvation, but a failure to exercise saving faith in light of the blessings to which the readers have been exposed.

48 "There is certainly some overlap of meaning between the four clauses, and attempts to distinguish sharply between them are contradictory and unsuccessful" (Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 319).


50 See *m. Sanh.* 10:3 for rabbinitic debate whether or not the wilderness generation would have a share in the age to come.


53 Ibid., 171-72. For further discussion of the issue of assurance see also D. A. Carson, "Reflections on Christian Assurance," *WTJ* 54 (1992) 1-29. The issue is not whether 6:4-6 describes a genuine experience (it does). Rather, the issue is whether 6:4-6 is describing those who have had a genuine saving experience. Therefore, it will not do to conclude that 6:4-6 envisions individuals who gave all the appearances of true saving faith (vv. 4-6), which their subsequent falling away demonstrated to be spurious.
through association with the Christian community. The preceding
sis of the OT background to 6:4-6 confirms Grudem's conclusions. Thus in
analogy to the old covenant community, those envisioned in vv. 4-6 have
experienced the blessings of the new covenant ("being enlightened," "tast-
ing the heavenly gift," etc.), experiences common to all by virtue of be-
longing to the new covenant community, but have recapitulated the error
of their old covenant predecessors by failing to believe and rejecting what
they have experienced. In doing so they come under the covenantal curse.

V. Conclusion

Heb 6:4-6 provides a intriguing test-case and example of how uncovering
OT allusions and echoes can shed valuable interpretive light on a proble-
matic text. While an OT background to this section of Hebrews has gone
virtually unnoticed (probably due to lack of explicit citations), it has been
argued on contextual and linguistic grounds that the Old Testament depiction
of the wilderness generation and the incident at Kadesh-barnea, which has
"bled over" from its use in 3:7-4:13, provides a compelling background
(through allusion and echo) to Heb 6:4-6 and yields valuable semantic
results. It also has profound implications for dealing with a sticky theological
difficulty.

Hughes reflects a similar understanding when he concludes: "The sin of apostasy, then,
is a grim (and far more than a merely hypothetical) possibility for persons who through
identification with the people of God have been brought within the sphere of divine blessing"
(Hebrews, 217).

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The Significance of Joshua's Reception of the Laying on of Hands in Numbers 27:12-23

Keith Mattingly
Andrews University

Because Christian rites of ordination regularly involve the imposition of hands, scholars generally recognize the importance of understanding this practice. Instituted early in the church's development and thus in close proximity with its Jewish origins, the imposition of hands has been thought by scholars to stem most likely from OT roots. Jewish exegetes and Pentateuchal critical scholars have often adopted the view that ordination was performed for the first time when Moses ordained Joshua with the laying on of hands and that Joshua's installation by Moses became the prototype of rabbinic ordination. It has also been proposed that Christian ordination originally structured itself on the model of rabbinic ordination, even though it is also understood that it took on meaning of its own. Thus in both Jewish and Christian traditions, Joshua's installation has powerfully influenced ordination practice which includes the laying on of hands.

1 Jean Thierry Maertens, "Un rite de pouvoir: l'imposition des mains," *Studies in Religion* 7 (1978): 29. Eduard Lohse suggests that these OT roots are authenticated by the linguistic relationships evident between Hebrew and Greek expressions for the imposition of hands in *Die Ordination im Spatjudentum und im Neuen Testament* (Göttingen: Vandenhoek und Ruprecht, 1951), 18.


While many scholars agree that Joshua's installation has prototypical influence on Christian ordination practice, very few agree as to the significance of Moses' laying hands on Joshua. Did Moses transfer anything to Joshua through the hand-laying gesture, and if so, what did he transfer? Did the gesture merely designate Joshua as the one to be ordained or, on the other hand, merely identify Moses with Joshua? Perhaps laying on of hands indicated Joshua as in some way a substitute or a representative of YHWH or Moses. Finally, were two hands laid on Joshua or one, and what is the significance of the number of hands used?

In order to answer these questions, one must exegetically study the two Pentateuchal pericopes which describe the event, Num 27:12-23 and Deut 34:9. It is the purpose of this article to present an exegetical study of laying on of hands as presented in Num 27:12-23. The contribution or Deut 34:9 and final conclusions addressing the procedural techniques, symbolic meanings, and tangible effects of the hand-laying gesture will be presented in a subsequent article.

Num 27:12-23 plays an important role in the overall theme of the book of Numbers. Israel had arrived on the plains of Moab and was preparing to enter the Promised Land. The census of Num 26 established a new generation, who was given permission to enter that land. The necessity of new leadership to lead this new generation into the land must be addressed, and Num 27:12-23 addresses this necessity.

An analysis of the pericope's structure provides the starting point for an interpretation of the significance of the hand-laying gesture. Numbers 27:12-23 contains four sections indicated by and related to each other through external, internal, and sequential parallelism. In the external parallelism, the last two sections repeat a pattern established by the first two sections, designated as A, B, A', B'. Each of the A sections presents statements made by YHWH, and each of the B sections present Moses' responses. In the internal parallelism, each of the four sections is further divided into four subsections, which generally follow the pattern established by the four subsections of section A, designated as a, b, c, d, in section B, as a₁, b₁, c₁, d₁; in section A', as a₂, b₂, c₂, d₂, and in Section B', as a₃, b₃, c₃, a₄. Each of the "a" subsections introduces the speaker of that section, each "b" subsection gives a request or response to subsection "a," each of the "c" subsections addresses leadership issues, and each of the "d" subsections addresses congregational issues. In the sequential parallelism, each section responds to issues of the previous

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section; in other words, B responds to issues raised in A, A' responds to issues raised in B, and B' responds to issues raised in A' and may be designated as A-B-A'-B'. The pericope parallels can be illustrated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>YHWH Announced Moses' Death, vv. 12-14</th>
<th>A'</th>
<th>YHWH Instructed Moses to Install Joshua, vv. 18-21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>Introductory Identifier, v. 12a</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>Introductory Identifier, v. 18a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>Request, v. 12b</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>Request, v. 18b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>Leader Issues, v. 13</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>Leader Issues, vv. 18c-20a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>Congregation Issues, v. 14</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>Congregation Issues, vv. 20b-21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B</th>
<th>Moses Requested YHWH to Appoint a Leader, vv. 15-17</th>
<th>B'</th>
<th>Moses Followed YHWH's Instructions to Install Joshua, vv. 22-23</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>Introductory Identifier, v. 15</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>Introductory Identifier, v. 22a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>Request, v. 16</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>Response to Request, v. 22b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>Leader Issues, v. 17a,b</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>Leader Issues, vv. 22c-22a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>Congregation Issues, v. 17c</td>
<td></td>
<td>Concluding Identifier, v. 23b</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The translation of the pericope:

A a and YHWH said to Moses,  
  b Go up into this mountain of Abarim  
    and see the land which I have given to the sons of Israel.  
  c After you have seen it, you will be gathered to your people,  
    even you, just as was gathered Aaron your brother,  
  d because you rebelled against my word in the wilderness of Zin, in the rebellion of the congregation, to sanctify me at the waters before their eyes. These are the Waters of Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin.
B  a₁ And Moses spoke to God, saying:
b₁ Let YHWH appoint, the God of the spirits of all flesh, a man over 
the congregation,  
c₁ who will go out before them and who will come in before  
them, who will lead them out and who will bring them in,  
d₁ so that the congregation of YHWH will not be as sheep  
who have no shepherd.
A' a₂ And YHWH said to Moses,  
b₂ Take (to yourself) Joshua, son of Nun, a man in whom there is  
spirit,  
c₂ and lay your hand on him, and stand him before Eleazar the 
priest and before all the congregation, and commission him 
before their eyes, and you shall confer some of your honor on him so that will listen all the congregation of the sons of Israel.
d₂ He shall stand before Eleazar the priest and he shall ask for 
him by the judgment of the Urim before YHWH. 
According to His word they shall go out and according to 
His word they shall come in, he and all the sons of Israel 
with him, even all the congregation.
B' a₃ And Moses did just as YHWH commanded him.  
b₃ and he took Joshua  
c₃ and stood him before Eleazar the priest and before all the 
congregation and he laid his hands on him and he  
commissioned him  
a₄ just as YHWH spoke by the hand of Moses.

This study focuses on the third section of the pericope, A', vv. 18-21. 
Sections A and B provide background material to A'. Section A' gives the 
information pertinent to interpreting laying on of hands; B' concludes by 
repeating step by step Moses' accomplishment of YHWH's instructions in A'. 
Interpreting the significance of the laying on of hands begins by 
noting the flow in the subsections of A'. The flow begins in subsection a₂ 
(v. 18a) by identifying the speaker, YHWH. The flow continues in 
subsection b₂ with YHWH's request, "take to yourself" Joshua. This 
imperative then initiates a series of four actions in subsection c₂ that relate 
to leadership issues: lay, stand, command, and give. The four actions are 
tied together by four second masculine singular waw perfect verbs 
indicating how Israel's next leader is to be installed. It is interesting to 
note that the waw perfect construction expresses a series of actions
contingent or dependent upon the preceding action and at the same time establishes a hierarchy: first, "lay"; second, "stand"; third, "command"; and fourth, "give." Subsection c2 concludes with a "so that" clause, indicating that the actions of the waw perfect verbs have the purpose of giving status to Joshua—the children of Israel are to listen to him. Finally, in subsection d2 the flow moves to congregational issues. First, Joshua was to stand before the high priest when he needs to know the will of YHWH for leading the congregation. Second, once Joshua received YHWH's word, he and the congregation were free to go out and to come back. Study will now be given to each of these four subsections.

**Introductory Identifier—"And YHWH Said to Moses" (Subsection a)**

The Hebrew verb for "said" (רָמַא) appears about 5,300 times in the OT, never with the purpose of describing the technique of speaking, "but to call attention to what is being said."6 Frequently, רָמַא is used by God to introduce revelation, in which he expresses himself and his will: "One would suppose that this usage emphasizes that God's revelation is a spoken, transmissible, propositional, definite matter."7 The expression "thus says YHWH" added authority and importance to any instruction.8 When YHWH spoke, Moses listened and Moses responded.

The instructions of Num 27:18-20 are initiated by YHWH's word. These are no ordinary instructions, but have the weight of the divine behind them. The words which describe Joshua's installation, and which include laying on of hands, are attributed to God himself; they are not words invented by Moses. The pericope concludes in v. 23 by emphasizing that all was accomplished according as YHWH spoke (דִּיבָר), by the hand of Moses.

**The Imperative—"Take Joshua, a Man in Whom There is Spirit" (Subsection b)**

This simple command provides a wealth of information. First, it is parallel to the commands (v. 12) to "go up" the mountain and "see" the Promised Land, which had the result of placing Moses in a position where

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7 Charles L. Feinberg, "רָמַא (‘amar) say, speak, say to oneself (think), intend, command, promise," *TWOT* (1980), 1:55.
8 This phrase was used in talking to Pharaoh (Exod 9:13; 10:3), when announcing YHWH's will for Israel to leave Egypt (Exod 11:4), and when Moses dealt with the rebellion of the golden calf (Exod 32:27).
YHWH could give a third command, "take" Joshua. Second, it is also parallel to Moses' request in v. 16 to "appoint" a leader. YHWH responded that Moses "take" Joshua, thus communicating to Moses that he too had a role to play in establishing Israel's next leader. Third, the imperative "take" initiated a process of subsequent actions, indicated by the series of waw perfect verbs in subsection c2. Finally, Joshua, son of Nun, a man in whom there is spirit, was the one identified as the one to be taken.

The word for "spirit" in "a man in whom there is spirit" has no article, making it difficult to develop a simple interpretation of what spirit Joshua possessed. "Spirit" should be linked to its parallel subsection usage in Section B (v. 16), which identifies YHWH as the "God of the spirits of all flesh." YHWH is thus identified as the sovereign Creator. He is the one who gives breath or spirit; therefore, he is the one who knows what the spirit of a man really is. Identifying Joshua as a "man in whom there is spirit" indicates that YHWH knows who Joshua is and can guarantee Moses that Joshua possesses the requisite spiritual qualifications and skills for leadership.9

Is this spirit Joshua possesses a reference to God's spirit, or to the fact that Joshua was a spirited man? The answer is yes to both questions. First, Leon Wood argues that the lack of an article attached to the word "spirit" does not necessarily preclude a reference to the Spirit of God. He uses for support 1 Chr 12:18, where the word "spirit" lacks an article yet obviously refers to YHWH's Spirit. Wood further argues that Moses was endowed with YHWH's Spirit, as evidenced by the story of the seventy elders with whom he shared some of his spirit (Num 11:16-28) and by Isaiah's reference to the "Holy Spirit within Moses" (Isa 63:11). If Moses was endowed with the Spirit, "one should only expect that his successor would have to be."10


10 Leon J. Wood, The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan,
Second, "spirit" (πνεῦμα) can indicate internal elements of an individual. One particular element referred to is that of ability. YHWH endowed Bezaleel with a divine spirit of skill, ability, and knowledge so that he could construct the Tabernacle. In Joshua's case, spirit would refer to his endowed leadership skill. YHWH had already chosen, authenticated, and endowed him with a divine spirit of skill, ability, knowledge, and insight to qualify him for the work. Additionally, the word "spirit" can depict a person's dominant disposition of mind or attitude. In particular, "spirit" is used as a synonym for "courage." Designating Joshua as a "man in whom there is spirit" may in part refer not only to the spy scenario, but also to Joshua's long service to Moses as well as to the entire congregation. To describe Joshua as "a man in whom there is spirit" is to describe him as a man full of life. As such, YHWH declared that Joshua has the spirit of life and courage necessary to provide the kind of strong leadership necessary to lead Israel into the Promised Land.

To summarize, YHWH, the God of the spirits of all flesh, identified Joshua, a man in whom there is spirit. Joshua is thus indicated as one with an indomitable and courageous spirit. But more, as the giver of spirit, YHWH also identifies Joshua as one to whom he had given a special Spirit, a Spirit that has changed him and endowed him for leadership.

1976), 49-50. Allen (2:946) states that "spirit" can also refer to the Holy Spirit, noting that though the word πνεῦμα (spirit) in Num 27:18 is indefinite by spelling, it "may be regarded as inherently definite when used as a reference to deity"; see also Clarke, 1:707-708; Greenstone, 297.


Joshua had displayed his courage early in his victory over the Amalekites. Caleb had a different spirit than the ten faithless spies, meaning he had not angered YHWH by his obstinacy and rebelliousness like the others, but had instead maintained wholehearted commitment to YHWH, which resulted in an indomitable and positive attitude toward invading Canaan. Though Joshua's spirit is not specifically mentioned in the discussion of Caleb's spirit, the narrative indicates that he shared in that spirit of courageously following YHWH wholeheartedly. Joshua built upon Caleb's spirit by making the case for invasion even more specific and serious.


W. Vogels argues that though this translation is possible due to Ps 31:6, Joshua has more than life; he has the spirit of YHWH ("The Spirit of Joshua and the Laying on of Hands by Moses," in The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays, trans. E W. Trueman Dicken [New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966], 3-7).
Congregation "Listen to" (Subsection c_2)

To review, the flow in each of the four major sections of Num 27:12-23 first identifies the section's main character, then through an imperative either makes a request or gives a response to the previous request, and then introduces matters concerning leadership. In section A, YHWH clarified that Moses as Israel's current leader would soon die. In section B, Moses indicated the desire for a leader who had the internal fortitude necessary to lead the congregation of Israel out and back in. In section A', YHWH responded by instructing how Moses was to install Joshua as the next leader. The imperative level (subsection b_2) of section A' established a command (take) that was intended to initiate a series of four actions by which Moses was to install Joshua as a leader whom the congregation would obey. The four actions were to lay hands on Joshua, stand (present) him before Eleazar and the congregation, commission (charge) him, and give him some of Moses' honor.

"Lay your hand on him." The first action to be initiated by the imperative "take" was that Moses was to lay his hand on Joshua. In order to adequately develop the significance of the hand gesture, one must first study all the other accompanying elements. It should be noted, however, that laying on of hands is the first of the actions indicated by the imperative "take," even though it was not intended that this hand gesture be the first action Moses performed in the installation. YHWH's initial instructions to Moses indicated that Joshua's installation take place in a public setting, thus creating a situation in which public presentation must precede any other action. The installation, as recorded in Num 27:22-23, confirms this conclusion, for Moses first "stood" or presented Joshua to the children of Israel, then "laid" hands on him. By placing hand-laying first, even though it could not be performed first, YHWH appears to be stating that all the other actions depend on it. Structural analysis thus provides a preliminary conclusion. Joshua's public presentation, commissioning, and reception of some of Moses' honor were to each somehow find their meaning or expression in the laying on of Moses' hands. Joshua's installation is rooted in Moses' hand-laying action.

"Stand him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation."

The second action to follow "taking" was that of presentation. Four observations can be made about the imperative to stand Joshua before priest and congregation. First, the concept of "standing before" in the OT can have the connotation of presentation.\textsuperscript{15} Joshua's formal presentation

\textsuperscript{15} R. B. Allen, "רָצַע (‘amad) stand, remain, endure, etc," \textit{TWOT} (1980), 2:673. Jacob is presented to Pharaoh (Gen 47:7), the cleansed leper is presented to YHWH at the door of the Tabernacle (Lev 14:11), two goats are presented before YHWH (Lev 16:7), the scapegoat is
had the dual purpose of giving him to the congregation and doing so in a judicial setting which established that Joshua was legally Israel's next leader. Second, the physical gesture of standing communicated Joshua's acceptance of his responsibilities as well as the congregation's and YHWH's acceptance of Joshua. Third, the verb "stand before" indicated a cultic and covenantal event. Fourth, the concept of standing before the priest and "congregation" give indication that Joshua's installation ceremony took place at the tent of meeting, the normal meeting place of the congregation. Joshua's leadership is thus connected to the Sanctuary and to all that it represented in maintaining contact and covenant with YHWH. His leadership must ever espouse these important principles.

"Commission him in their presence." The third action to follow "taking" was that of giving a commission. Moses was to "commission him (Joshua) before their eyes" (Num 27:19). The verb is a piel perfect, second masculine singular of הַנָּחַת, meaning either "to command" or "to give a charge." Numbers 27:19-22 uses both meanings, first in Moses' commissioning of Joshua (vv. 19, 23), and second in Moses' obedience of presented live before YHWH (Lev 16:10), a person is to be presented to the priest (Lev 27:8), an animal is presented to the priest (Lev 27:11), Levites are presented to Aaron for service (Num 3:6; 8:13), a suspected adulteress is presented by the priest or her husband before YHWH for judgment (Num 5:16, 18, 30). See Ashley, 552-553, where he lists ten of the eleven occurrences.

16 After seventy men died as a result of looking at the ark of the covenant, the men of Beth Shemesh asked, "Who can stand before YHWH" (1 Sam 6:20); YHWH asks, "What shepherd will stand before me?" (Jer 49:19; 50:44) implying that the shepherds are not acceptable to himself; YHWH also asks those who have performed all manner of evil how they think they can "stand before" him, meaning, they are to believe they are accepted (Jer 7:10); and Esther stood before Xerxes after he Indicated acceptance of her presence (Esth 5:1-2).

17 The OT sanctuary provided the Israelites with a refuge in which to contact YHWH, and its services gave institutional form to maintaining the covenant between YHWH and his people. To state that the phrase "stand before" carries cultic overtones is to say that it represents a ritual involved in Israel's worship of and maintaining contact with YHWH. The phrase "stand before" carried a cultic connection in at least two areas: (1) "stand before" could indicate ministry before or service to one of higher authority or to a group, or (2) stand before" could indicate a representational element in which one representing a group "stands before" another and intercedes in behalf of the group. In terms of leadership, if there was no blessing from the high priest, there would be no leader. Including Eleazar the priest in the formalities underscored the fact that Joshua's leadership of the Israelites was to be one of cooperation with the high priest. Joshua's rule was not to be profane; contact with YHWH was to hold first place in his governance.

18 Joshua's installation ceremony was public, held before the entire congregation (קְצִיף--a term with strong covenantal connections). It is the congregation with whom YHWH has made a covenant; it is the congregation who requires a leader sensitive to this covenant.

19 KJV, "give a charge"; RSV and NIV, "commission"; NKJV, "inaugurate."
YHWH's command (v. 22). Why would both meanings be used in so few verses? YHWH's control and input comprise one of the more important messages of this pericope. Moses' commissioning (חֲצָרָה) of Joshua directly results from YHWH's command (חֲצָרָה) to Moses. Moses may be the voice of the commission, but Joshua's commission originates with YHWH.

YHWH instructed Moses to give a solemn charge to Joshua "before their eyes," the eyes of Eleazar and the congregation. Previously in this pericope YHWH had used the same expression to remind Moses that he could not enter the Promised Land because he had not sanctified YHWH at the waters "before their eyes" (Num 27:14). Moses' public sin necessitated a change in Israel's leadership. With this reminder, Joshua's commission emphasized a call to consistently responsible leadership to be maintained in the view of all. The commissioning ceremony as a public event took place at the door of the tabernacle.

What are the contents of Joshua's commission? Three passages provide elements of the installation formula: Deut 3:21-28; 31:1-8, 14,23; and Josh 1:1-9. These passages indicate a four-part commission. First, Moses shared words of encouragement calculated to make Joshua firm and resolute. Based on past experience with YHWH, Joshua was encouraged to be strong and courageous, to not fear, or be alarmed, or be filled with terror. Second, Joshua was commissioned to a task, not a position. He was reminded that his task was to be twofold, that of going over the Jordan and into the Promised Land as well as that of appropriately dividing the land among the tribes. Third, Moses extended YHWH's promise of divine assistance, sufficiency, and companionship. Joshua was not to attend to his task alone. YHWH promised to fight for him, go before him, be with him, and never abandon or forsake him. Moses may have verbalized the commission, but YHWH personally effected it. Fourth, Moses exhorted Joshua to read, preserve, and carefully keep the law. He was not ever to depart from it, but to meditate on it day and night.

"Confer some of your honor on him." The fourth action to follow "taking" was that of conferring (ךָנה) some of Moses' honor (ךָנה) on Joshua. One catches "a glimpse of the esteem in which Moses was held" upon the realization that the word "honor," which describes an attribute of YHWH and of kings, also describes an attribute of Moses; "his was the

20 Milton C. Fisher, "ךָנה (natan) give," TWOT (1980), 2:608-609. Because of its extensive use (around two thousand times) in the OT,ךָנה has a great variety of meanings given in translation. This variety can be reduced to three broad areas: (1) give, (2) put or set, and (3) make or constitute. Translations include: set, commit, put, lay, fasten, hang, make, appoint, suffer, bestow, deliver, send, pay, turn, thrust, strike, cast, permit, place, store, attach, and spend. Its usage in Num 27:20 appears to be mainly connected with the more formal meaning of "appoint," thus the translation of "confer."
authority of a king. Like kings, Moses too had both external and internal honor (דִּינָם). But like kings, Moses' דִּינָם came from YHWH, a gift YHWH instructed him to share with Joshua. However, YHWH did not intend for Moses to pass all of his honor to Joshua, for his instructions added a partitive נמי (of) to דִּינָם (נֶמְלָדִינָם). Moses was to give Joshua only a part of his honor. Moses was to remain unique, like the sun, and Joshua, never the equal of Moses, was to reflect only some of Moses' honor as the moon reflects the sun's light. No matter how important Joshua was to become, he was never to rise to the level of his mentor.

Sharing some of Moses' honor with Joshua contributed an important element to Joshua's leadership. In a similar fashion as sharing some of his spirit with seventy elders (Num 11:16-27), Moses shared with Joshua a portion of his civil and spiritual authority as well as his honor, charisma, and prestige. Endowed to Joshua by YHWH, the gift of Moses' honor was confirmed by YHWH's appearance in a cloud (Deut 31:15). Israel's treatment of Joshua following Moses' death confirmed that Joshua received this gift.

Result of Moses' actions. The four waw perfect verbs of vv. 18-20, which follow the imperative "take," culminate in the נִפְטָל (so that, in order that) clause of v. 20. Moses is to lay his hand on Joshua, cause him to stand before Eleazar and the congregation, give him a charge, and give him some of Moses' authority, "so that" the whole congregation would listen (יִשָּׁמֶשׁ) to Joshua. This reaction of the congregation was not a matter concerning the congregation, but a matter of leadership. The appropriate response to all the actions of Moses in establishing Joshua as leader was that of obedience.

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21 Riggans, 203; see also Porter, Moses, 1-28. Porter argues that the working out of the Moses "tradition primarily took place in Jerusalem under the kings, who adopted Moses to be the link between their new monarchy and the older national traditions which preceded it" (22). He states that Moses "is unmistakably pictured in terms drawn from the language of Hebrew royal ideology" and "that Moses is the antitype of the Davidic monarch" (11). Porter's pamphlet discusses at some length the "role of Moses as king and arbiter of his people's destiny." He, however, carries his point too far when he claims that דִּינָם, "when applied to the human being is used exclusively of king" (18), for it also applied to Job and Daniel.

22 The OT commonly employs the partitive נמי; for example: Gen 4:3-4; Exod 16:27; see also Ashley, 547; Ronald J. Williams, Hebrew Syntax: An Outline, 2d ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976),324.


24 Allen proposes an additional interpretation, that "some of your honor," suggests a gradual shift in leadership, "not unlike a coregency of son and father as king" ("Numbers," 2:946).
While the verb 들 Commissioners (listen) basically means to perceive a sound, it more importantly in this context connotes a listening that pays careful attention to what is said.25 A call to 들 Commissioners (listen) is a call to understand and respond to what is heard.26 Calling for attention and understanding has obedience as a consequence, as classically illustrated in 1 Sam 15:22, "to obey (들 Commissioners) is better than sacrifice."27 After the death of Moses, at the time Joshua actually assumed command, the whole congregation pledged that as they had obeyed 들 Commissioners Moses, so they would now obey 들 Commissioners Joshua and that all who rebelled against Joshua and did not obey 들 Commissioners his words would be put to death.28

Matters Concerning the Congregation--Direction
From Eleazar (subsection d2)

To review, the flow in each of the four major sections of Num 27:12-23 first identifies the section's main character, then through an imperative either makes a request or gives a response to the previous request, and then introduces matters concerning leadership, and concludes by introducing matters concerning the congregation. The "congregation" remains a high priority throughout the pericope, as evidenced by its seven appearances and three appearances of the phrase "children of Israel." YHWH reminded Moses in Section A (v. 14) of the congregation's sin at Kadesh. Moses, touched by that reminder, pleaded in Section B (v. 17c) for a leader so that the congregation would not be left as sheep without a shepherd, and YHWH responded in Section A' (v. 21). Just how was Joshua to lead the congregation on a day-by-day basis?

Joshua's Action. Not all the privileges Moses enjoyed passed to Joshua, for he was not to depend on receiving Moses' honor of face-to-face conversation with YHWH. Joshua must "stand before" Eleazar (Num 27:21) when he needed YHWH's directions. Evidently the unity of Moses' office was to be shared between Joshua and Eleazar, the high priest.29 In the crossing of the Jordan and the conquest of Jericho, priests

27 See also Gen 16:2; 34:24; 42:22; Exod 24:7; Deut 1:43; 11:13; 1 Kgs 2:42; Neh 9:16; Isa 1:19; 42:24; Jer 35:18. The verb is used with the same sense of obedience in the context of ancient Near Eastern treaties. Peter C. Craigie, The Book of Deuteronomy, NICOT, 147.
28 Jos.h.1:17-18.
29 Philip J. Budd, Numbers, vol. 5, WBC (Waco,TX:Word, 1984), 307. Did the OT ever record that Joshua used the high priest to obtain information from YHWH? On the one
played an obvious role in carrying the Ark of the Covenant as well as in
the blowing of trumpets.\(^{30}\) Both Joshua and Eleazar were tasked with
dividing, the land equitably among the tribes.\(^{31}\) Joshua's one-time
experience of installation into office did not remove from him the
necessity of maintaining constant contact with YHWH. He was to
present himself to Eleazar the priest, who in turn presented himself to
YHWH through the Urim, in order to receive guidance for running the
affairs of the congregation.

**Result of Joshua's Action.** After having "stood before" Eleazar and
receiving YHWH's Judgment through the Urim, Joshua as well as the
whole congregation was to "go out" and to "come in" (Num 27:21).
Hebrew frequently uses antonyms to express totality. The expression for
"going out" and "coming in" comprehensively covers all leadership duties
and responsibilities, which include a managing and conducting of one's
own affairs as well as the affairs of state.\(^{32}\) Additionally, when used
separately, the Hebrew verbs translated as "go out" (וָאֵצָל) and to "come in"
(וָאֵילָל) were powerful covenantal reminders for the new leader. Used
frequently of the great exodus event, the hifil (causative) of יֵצָל (go out)
reminded one of the great "going out" event, the exodus from Egypt,
which symbolized the mighty redemption of God's people, an event
hand, Scriptures never record a time when Joshua asked for divine guidance through the high
priest. Instead, Scripture points out that YHWH spoke directly to him (Josh 7:7-15; 10:12-
14), encouraged Joshua that as he was with Moses he would be with Joshua (Josh 1:5; 3:7),
personally appeared to Joshua in order to give direct instruction about entry into the
Promised Land (Josh 1:1-9; 3:7-8; 4:1-3, 15-16; 5:2) as well as its conquest (Josh 6:2-5; 8:1-2;
8:18; 11:6; 13:1-7; cf. 5:14-15) and the establishment of the cities of refuge (Josh 20:1-6).
However, on the other hand, Num 27:21 gives clear indication that YHWH expected Joshua
to work through Eleazar, an expectation supported by two points made in the book of
Joshua. First, Joshua, through Eleazar, should have taken the initiative to contact YHWH
before making a covenant with the Gibeonites (Josh 9:14). Second, whenever Joshua is
mentioned with Eleazar, Eleazar's name appears first, implying a dependency upon him (Josh
14:1; 19:51; 21:1). See also Milgrom, *Numbers*, 236.

\(^{30}\) Josh 3:2, 6, 14, 15, 17; 4:11, 15; 6:4, 6, 8, 9, 12, 13, 16.

\(^{31}\) Num 34:17; Josh 14:1; 17:4; 19:51; 21:1.

*Leviticus and Numbers*, 147; Horst Dietrich Preuss, "וָאֵילָל yasa’," *TDOT* (1990), 6:226-227,
400.401. Gray points out that "to go out and come in" is an idiomatic method of expressing
activity in general by reference to its commencement and conclusion and is a usus loquendi
similar in character to the frequent periphrases for all which consist of two terms for
opposed classes; i.e., the fettered and the free, the dry and the thirsty, the binder and the bound.
Moses wished his people to often remember.\textsuperscript{33} On the other hand, \textit{κύλιον} (come in) spoke to the coming and bringing into the land of promise. Giving of the land as well as coming into possession of the land was YHWH's method of establishing the covenant.\textsuperscript{34}

\textit{Interpreting "Laying on of Hands."}

The instruction to Moses to "lay his hand" on Joshua has its origin with the Almighty, "and YHWH said to Moses" (Num 27:18). YHWH's words to Moses commenced with an imperative to "take" Joshua, a man in whom there is spirit. Laying on of hands, as one of the subsequent actions initiated by "taking," provided a means for Moses to become personally involved in the process of choosing Joshua as well as providing a means for Moses to physically manifest faith in YHWH. A review of Joshua's life history reveals a man who had a careful and close walk with his God. It was no common individual who received laying on of hands. YHWH, the God of the spirits of all flesh, confirmed that this one to receive the laying on of hands was a man in whom there was spirit. Not only was Joshua a man with an indomitable and courageous spirit, but YHWH had given him a special gift of the Spirit that changed him and endowed him for leadership. Hand-laying is thus associated with a spirited man as well as with a man filled with the Spirit of YHWH.

How does an interpretation of the phrase "standing before" apply to "laying on of hands"? First, the hand gesture followed formal presentation to Eleazar and the congregation (vv. 22-23). Joshua's formal presentation had the dual purpose of giving him to the congregation and doing so in a legal setting, thus giving judicial precedence to hand-laying. Second, hand-laying was associated with the physical gesture of standing that communicated Joshua's acceptance of his responsibilities as well as the congregation's and YHWH's acceptance of Joshua. Third, cultic usage of the term "stand before," reinforced by its association with Eleazar and the congregation, indicated hand-laying was part of a cultic and covenantal event. Finally, the term "stand before" also gives indication as to where Joshua's installation ceremony took place. Presentation to priests and meetings of the congregation generally took place at the tent of meeting. Thus, Joshua's hand-laying ceremony apparently took place at the courtyard gate of the tabernacle.

How does the phrase "commission him in their presence" apply to an


\textsuperscript{34} Horst Dietrich Preuss, "\textit{קִוָה}," \textit{TDOT} (1975), 2:27-30; Elmer Martens, "\textit{קִוָה} (bo') go in, enter," \textit{TWOT} (1980), 1:393-394.
interpretation of laying on of hands? Hand-laying is associated with a four-part commission, a commission which encouraged Joshua, described his task, extended YHWH's promise of divine assistance to accomplish the task, and exhorted him to keep the law. Hand-laying is thus associated with a commission verbally spoken by a human, but effected by YHWH.

In the implementation of YHWH's orders, Moses stood Joshua before Eleazar and the congregation, laid hands on him, and gave him a charge, but made no mention of giving him honor or authority. Why is this so? An answer to this question leads directly to laying on of hands. Note first that the four actions associated with "taking" by waw perfect verbs form the following chiasm:

A And you shall lay your hand on him.
B And you shall stand him before Eleazar the priest and before the congregation.
B' And you shall commission him before their eyes.
A' And you shall confer some of your honor on him.

Lines A and A' are linked by the Hebrew word יְלַמֵּש (on him) while lines B and B' are linked by the Hebrew word יְהֵש (him). The divine command of v. 20 instructed Moses to place some of his honor "on him" (יְלַמֵּש), meaning on Joshua. Use of יְלַמֵּש (on him) corresponds by parallelism directly to the יְלַמֵּש (on him) of the hand-laying instruction of v. 18, in which Moses was to lay his hand "on him" (יְלַמֵּש). "Moses thus establishes a physical conduit for the transfer of his דִּי, which is linked by waw consecutive verbs to standing Joshua before Eleazar and the congregation as well as to giving him a charge."35 The physical act of laying hands, combined with public presentation and giving a charge, became the actions which effectively passed some of Moses' honor to Joshua.

An analysis of waw perfect verbs provides two further observations about laying on of hands: (1) its priority with respect to the other actions and (2) its relationship to the other actions in the installation ceremony. As noted above, normally waw perfect verbs are thought to continue the idea communicated by the verbal form of the imperative and express its purpose or a consequent situation. Placing a waw on a perfect gives the verb an imperfect sense, which expresses a logical succession of actions contingent or dependent on that which precedes it. The sense of the imperative of v. 18, "take," continues with each of the following verbs connected to it by the waw. At the same time a hierarchy is established: first, lay; second, stand; third, command or charge; and fourth, give. Each command becomes contingent on the previous. Hence, the primary action of this series of

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35 Milgrom, Numbers, 235.
commands becomes laying, or the laying of Moses' hand on Joshua.

One other syntactic role of the waw conjunctive/consecutive arises from what Waltke and O'Conner refer to as the "copulative waw" and Williams as the "waw of accompaniment." In other words, the waw introduces a clause describing concomitant circumstances which coordinate with each other. In this case, hand-laying would take place concurrently with presentation, commissioning, and giving some of Moses' honor. However, even though all activities may take place concurrently, the activity listed first, or laying on of hands, retains primary significance in the hierarchy of all the activities. Though primary, to be effective, laying on of hands must also be accompanied by public presentation, giving of a charge, and sharing of honor.

One discovers the further importance attached to laying on of hands by comparing the order of activities in YHWH's command to Moses (vv. 18b-20a) with Moses' implementation of the command (vv. 22b-23a). The importance of hand-laying is emphasized by the fact that it was mentioned first in YHWH's command even though Moses did not physically lay his hands on Joshua before making Joshua's public presentation. By placing hand-laying first in the initial instructions to Moses, YHWH declares its primacy over all the other actions and its importance in the installation of Joshua.

The pericope's conclusion (Section B') provides a second chiasm emphasizing the importance of laying on of hands.

A And he stood him (וַיֹּאכַל) before Eleazar the priest and before the congregation.
B And he laid his hands on him.
A' And he commissioned him (וַיֹּכַל).

Lines A and A' are linked in Hebrew by third masculine singular suffixes attached to the verbs. In the instructions of section A', the pronoun "him" had been indicated by the Hebrew word ink, but in the implementation of the instructions, the pronoun is indicated by a suffix. However, the description of the implementation for laying on of hands retains the same Hebrew word for "on him" (וַיְכִל) that had been used in the instruction of section A'. Laying on of hands falls into the center, again an indication of its importance.

36 Williams, 83. Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor introduce a history of the controversy wrapped around understanding the conjunction waw. The variety of terms used to describe the conjugation gives evidence of the struggle to understand it. Hebraists are not in agreement and have advanced various theories in a fashion something like the proverbial five blind men examining an elephant. Each of them has described a portion of the beast accurately, but they differed in their conclusions because they tried to describe the whole by generalizing from a part (An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990], 456-457).
Numbers 27:12-23 concludes by, drawing attention to Moses' hand in a different fashion. Joshua’s installation took place “just as YHWH spoke by the hand of Moses” (Num 27:23). Two Important concepts are placed in juxtaposition with each other, the "word" of YHWH with the "hand" of Moses.\(^{37}\) Throughout Israel's experience, the "word" of God played a significant role.\(^{38}\) Walter Roehrs observes that the "word of God denotes the acts of God’s revelation as embodying and charged with all the characteristics of God. In and by the word, God acts, conveys, and communicates Himself."\(^{39}\) Because דָּבָר (word) "posits the reality which it signifies," דָּבָר has been used in contexts where in English we use "thing."\(^{40}\)

When applied to the divine arena, the “word” of YHWH comes as a dynamic "something" with its own distinct reality that is an expansion of YHWH himself, filled with his personal power. And when YHWH's word comes, it possesses creative power and effects what it signifies, for when YHWH posits the word-thing, nothing can prevent its emergence.\(^{41}\) The OT also treats the "word of YHWH" as an object or bearer of power which always accomplishes its mission and thus creates history and shapes the future.\(^{42}\) Because YHWH's "word" has been treated as an object with such power, the OT invites YHWH’s people to “see” his word.\(^{43}\)

By placing Moses' "hand" in juxtaposition with YHWH's "word," Num 27:23 makes a significant statement about Moses' hand. His hand became a visible representation of YHWH's communication and of YHWH's power. Moses' hand enabled Israel to see the "word" of YHWH. While it should be noted that thirty-one times the OT states that YHWH acted "by the hand of Moses," it should also be noted that the expression receives limited usage. It appears to be no accident that the expression was used in this pericope. Moses’


\(^{38}\) Especially during the exodus from Egypt when the word of YHWH moved Israel at each step from Horeb to Canaan, i.e., Deut 1:6; 2:2,18, 31; 3:1; 3:27-28.

\(^{39}\) Roehrs, 264.


\(^{41}\) Ibid., 196. By the word of YHWH were the heavens made (Pss 19:2-5; 33:6, 9; 147:15-18; 148:8).

\(^{42}\) When YHWH's "word" goes out, it will not return empty but will accomplish its mission (Isa 45:23; 55:10-11).

\(^{43}\) See, for example, Jer 2:31.
act of laying his hands on Joshua became a visible enactment of the "word" of YHWH with all of its attendant concepts of power and ability to create and effect what it signifies. Thus it becomes clear why, in the list of actions Moses is to accomplish in the installation of Joshua, the laying on of hands carried primary significance.

Joshua's reception of hand-laying along with the critical elements of public presentation, commissioning, and some of Moses' honor was calculated to have a certain effect. Joshua was to receive something further--that is, obedience of the whole community. However, receiving such recognition did not put Joshua on the same plane as Moses, nor did it remove from Joshua the need of continually seeking YHWH's will. Though hand-laying carried high importance, it did not place Joshua in such a position that he could depend on direct access to YHWH for all of his leadership decisions. Joshua was to seek YHWH's will by standing before the high priest, Eleazar, who in turn was to seek that will through use of the Urim. But once Joshua ascertained YHWH's will, the congregation was to follow his directions.

Numbers 27:12-23 clarifies the importance of hand-laying in Joshua's installation. The gesture is primary in the procedure and results in the congregation's obedience. Did the gesture in any way change Joshua? A careful study of Deut 34:9 will provide an answer.

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Cities of Refuge

Preston L. Mayes

Much of the Mosaic legislation contained in the Pentateuch seems foreign to the modern reader. The laws concerning the priesthood, the sacrificial system, and the religious holidays are neither practiced nor paralleled in the dispensation of the church. Though they do have didactic and illustrative value as types of the work of Christ, they are often rushed over or skipped altogether in personal Bible study.

The Old Testament legislation concerning so-called moral law has received greater attention. Since it addresses many issues which are also social problems in the twentieth century, it is frequently lifted from its Old Testament context and applied to contemporary society. Provisions for dealing with cases of adultery, homosexuality, theft, and murder in Israel are a few of the regulations which commonly receive such treatment. Several minority political/religious groups even advocate a complete return to Old Testament-style political regulations and policies.

It is within the context of this debate that the Old Testament legal provisions concerning the city of refuge should be studied. These cities were designated locations to which one who was guilty of accidental homicide\(^1\) could flee in order to receive legal protection and a fair trial. They were part of the ancient legal system which recognized the right and even the

\(^1\) This paper will refer to an accidental homicide as manslaughter and a deliberate homicide as murder.
responsibility of the nearest relative of a dead victim to put the murderer to death. Since modern society is again embracing the death penalty, it will be wise to consider the function and use of the city of refuge in order to determine if it is in any way relevant for modern society.

The legislation concerning cities of refuge is found in Exodus 21:12-14; Numbers 35:9-34; Deuteronomy 4:41-43; 19:1-13; and Joshua 20:1-9. There are several relevant examples from the historical books of the concepts of refuge and blood vengeance found in 1 Samuel 21 and 1 Kings 1-2. The goal of this paper is to summarize the Old Testament legislation on this aspect of Israelite society, and then to determine if it has any applicability to the current age. To that end, the paper will first examine several critical theories both of which erode the value of the Old Testament as a historical document in general and as a clear witness to the validity of this legislation in particular, and which challenge the provisions of the law as barbaric. Second, a brief summary of the teaching of the passages mentioning cities of refuge will be made, carefully noting the similarities and differences between them. After synthesizing the passages into a summary of the Old Testament teaching on the subject, its relevance for modern criminal justice will be examined. The study will be limited only to those aspects of Hebrew law which are relevant to the legislation governing the cities of refuge and will not analyze any of the other offenses for which capital punishment is mandated (adultery, dishonor to parents, etc.). Nor will it systematically compare Old Testament law to other ancient near eastern systems of law, except when relevant for the present study. Finally, no attempt will be made to explore the relationship between the six named cities of refuge in Joshua 20:7-8 and the 48 Levitical cities in Joshua 21.
Critical Theories

Textual Development

The legislation concerning the cities of refuge does not occur in one text of the Scriptures, nor are all the mandates listed in one scripture text. Due to this fact, it is possible to discover apparent "discrepancies" between the various pieces of legislation. For example, Exodus 21:13-14 indicates that God would appoint a place for the manslayer to flee, but that this protection would not extend to the one guilty of murder. The one guilty of murder was to be removed even from the altar of God and put to death. Though this place is distinct from the altar mentioned in verse 14, it is unclear exactly where it will be located.²

Conversely, Numbers 35 and Deuteronomy 19 speak of the establishment of cities of refuge for the one guilty of manslaughter without mentioning any altar. These variations in the texts have been exploited by source-critical scholars holding to a late date for the book of Deuteronomy in line with the theory that it was produced as a part of Josiah's reform movement. Milgrom, for instance states,

What is the relationship between the asylum altar and the asylum cities? Most critics hold that asylum cities were designated by Israelite rulers to replace the anarchic power of the altar to grant asylum, but they are divided on when the change took place. Some opt for the reign of David and Solomon, and some for Josiah.³

Proponents of the theory usually note that it was necessary to eliminate the prominence of local altars as Josiah worked for religious reform since they had become centers for idol worship, and that the asylum cities were established in order to replace this one particular function of the altar. The theory holds that since Deuteronomy does not even mention the altar that, "the sole conclusion. . . is that D[Deuteronomy] no longer knew of the institution of the asylum altar. If the altar was replaced by the city, it happened long before D"\(^4\) Since the Bible clearly records Adonijah and Joab requesting asylum by grabbing on to the altar in I Kings 1 and 2, the conclusion supported by this critical theory is that Deuteronomy was written no earlier than the time of Solomon.

This conclusion of critical scholarship is both wrong and unnecessary. That there is a certain evolution in the concept of asylum cannot be denied, but it is the product of progressive revelation over a relatively short period of time instead of the product of religious decline over many centuries. Exodus 21, penned at the beginning of Israel's Wilderness wanderings, was written to a group of people living as nomads gathered in one central location. Presumably, an accidental murder might have been committed, in which case the guilty party would flee for protection to the altar within the camp. Exodus, therefore, merely mentions that at some future time, God will establish places for them to flee while leaving the function of the altar as a place of asylum intact. In Numbers and Deuteronomy, however, the people are on the verge of entering the land and their manner of life is about to change. They are about to be split into their tribal groups and spread throughout a large geographic area. At this point, they receive instructions concerning the number and location of the cities. They are also

\(^4\) Ibid., 304.
given laws concerning the determination of whether a killing was a murder or a manslaughter. Since Moses the lawgiver was present and acted as a judge among the people, these principles were certainly followed by him when judging such cases. Now, however, these laws are recorded in view of the impending dispersion of the people through the land. Tigay suggests this when he writes,

Exodus 21:13-14 establishes a place to which accidental killers may flee, but that intentional killers are to be denied even the time-honored asylum of the altar. . . . Numbers 35:9-34 fleshes out the law. . . . It describes circumstances which create a prima facie case that the killing was intentional and a smaller number of conditions establishing that it may not have been.⁵

In similar fashion, Craigie advocates that, Deuteronomy 19:1-13

seems to be an expansion of the simpler law contained in Exodus 21:12-14, where the altar (presumably that in the sanctuary of the Lord) offered protection. . . . As the Israelites took possession of the land, however, the sanctuary and its altar would be located a considerable distance away from the majority of the population.⁶


Therefore, the variations in the legislation concerning manslaughter and cities of refuge indicate the sociological transformation Israel underwent during a very short period of time. They indicate progressive revelation, not a slow, humanly-produced process of religious evolution culminating in a reform movement.

**Status as a Humane Punishment**

The second controversy stirred by critical theorists is to consider the inherent morality of the whole concept of capital punishment and the accompanying legislation concerning the cities of refuge. The fact that someone's life is to be taken from them has been assumed to be a barbaric vestige of ancient civilization. The law, however, always fits the punishment to the crime; and since murder requires that one lose his life, it is indicative of the high regard which the Scriptures reflect for human life. This high regard is especially evident when compared to the punishments prescribed by other ancient Near Eastern cultures for similar offenses. Greenberg remarks that the insistence of life for life to the exclusion of monetary compensation—a severity unparalleled in ancient Near Eastern law and which had its counterpart in the refusal to consider any offense against property worthy of the death penalty—was equally unheard of in all Near Eastern systems but the Hittite.7

Other ancient systems of law allowed the family of the victim to receive financial compensation from the murderer. As Greenberg states,

> Not the archaicness of the biblical law of homicide relative to that of the cuneiform codes, nor the progressiveness of the biblical law of theft relative to

7 Greenberg, "The Biblical Conception of Asylum," 129.
that of Assyria and Babylonia, but a basic difference in the evaluation of life and property separates the one from the others. In the biblical law a religious evaluation; in non-biblical, an economic and political evaluation predominates.8

The Old Testament law, therefore, can in no sense be viewed as an archaic and outdated barbarism. The fact that the most valuable of all commodities, human life, should be prized and protected in so many instances and taken away in other instances is certainly paradoxical to the thought processes of fallen human reasoning, but it is the only penalty for murder which is just.

The legislation regarding the cities of refuge fit in as a part of this high regard the Old Testament law holds for human life. In many ancient societies, the administration of justice was largely a private matter to be dealt with by individuals. The "aspiration [of the laws] to control vengeance by making it possible for public justice to intervene between the slayer and the avenger has long been recognized as an advance over the prior custom of regarding homicide as a purely private matter to be settled between the families of the two parties”9 City of refuge legislation, therefore, was the instrument by which each accused killer had the opportunity to receive due process. Before one could be put to death, he had to stand trial before the congregation/elders and be declared guilty. It also removed the automatic protection the ancient custom of grabbing the horns of the altar provided to anyone, whether innocent or


guilty.10 Miscarriage of justice occurs when either the guilty go free or the innocent are punished. The city of refuge legislation has the specific purpose of avoiding either extreme.

Texts Relation to Cities of Refuge

Having examined the critical theories which challenge both the historical development of the legislation and its status as a moral and fair punishment, it is now time to examine the various passages which established the cities of refuge.

Exodus 21:12-14

This passage occurs in a section of laws establishing the death penalty. The general principle stated in verse 12 is that one who strikes a person so that he dies must also be put to death. The exception given for the law is in cases of premeditated murder. If the killer did not lie in wait (Hebrew הָדַע), thus indicating a calculated murder, then he was to have the opportunity to flee to a place of safety. According to verse 14, the one who did act with treachery toward any comrade was a murderer and would have to be put to death. The one guilty of murder was to be taken from the altar itself and put to death.

Two curious features are present in the text. First, the exact nature of the homicide is ambiguous. It may refer to a crime of passion,11 which takes place in the heat of an argument and is not premeditated. It may refer to an accidental death. The Hebrew in Exodus 21:13 states:

10 Milgrom, "Santa Contagion and Altar/City Asylum," note 84, 309.
The English translation of the phrases reads "but if he did not lie in wait, but God let him fall into his hand." The subject of the first phrase is the third person "he," while the subject of the second phrase is the third person "God." Thus the text represents the primary mover in the death of the individual as a different person in each case. As Sarna concludes, "the theological assumption is that the death of the victim occurred by the intervention of Providence; thus, the manslayer was the unwitting agent." Verse 14 repeats the same basic premise from the perspective of the one who is worthy of death. The Hebrew, בְּכֵי־יַלְדוּ אֲשֶׁר־אִשָּׁה לִאְרָה לְתוֹרָה בֵּיתָהּ בְּשֵׁםָה is translated "but if a man acts presumptuously against his neighbor in order to kill him with cunning." Smith defines the meaning of the verb יִד as, "connected to individuals or nations who presume to have authority or rights that are not legitimately theirs. This may involve an attitude or behavior that ignores or rejects the validity of God's authority to control Israelites by his laws." Thus the legislation involved in the verse is directed to anyone who takes the life of another without having the judicial authorization to do so, unless the death can be ruled an accident. The legislation would also presumably apply to a crime of passion. Even a crime of passion requires that one person find a tactical advantage against another person which he may exploit in order to kill the person. Furthermore, in the same context verse 18 stipulates regulations for reparations to

12 Nahum M. Sarna, Exodus, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 122, believes that "Hebrew makom, like its Arabic cognate maqum, probably means here 'sacred site,' a sanctuary"

be made when two men fight. If the injured man thoroughly recovers, the other party is liable only for the loss of income during the time the man recovered. The provision is valid, however, only if the man does not die. If a death occurs, then presumably the one who caused it is then liable to death. The place of asylum envisioned in the passage then is for situations of accidental, unpremeditated murder. It is not for cases of premeditated murder, regardless of the time lapse between the decision to kill another and the commission of the act.

The second issue to resolve concerns the location of the asylum which is provided as a refuge for the manslayer. Verse 13 indicates that God will appoint a "place" (פָּדָה) to which the manslayer may flee. The corresponding legislation of verse 14 states that one who does not meet the qualifications for innocence because he committed premeditated murder is to be taken from the altar and put to death. The perfect verb in verse 13 looks to the point in time when Israel is in the land and God will have provided a definite place for them to go to deal with such matters. Verse 14 indicates that even the time-honored asylum given by an altar will not deliver a murderer from his punishment. The passage, therefore, envisions a specific place, whether referring to a holy site or a city, to which one guilty of manslaughter must go for asylum. The exact relationship between the altar and the asylum city is never specified.

**Numbers 35:9-34**

Numbers 35 is the next passage which addresses legal provisions for places of asylum. This passage, which introduces the term "city of refuge," expands greatly upon the general provisions set forth in Exodus 21:12-14. Speaking of this contrast, Ashley writes,

14 cf. fn. 12.
The law of Exod. 21:13-14 allowed for temporary asylum, but did not designate the place (except to say that it may be at an altar) or define how long the asylum may last. The current passage more carefully distinguishes murder from unintentional killing. . . puts responsibility for determining guilt or innocence in the hands of the congregation. . . and defines the time period of the guilty party's stay in a city of refuge.15

Apparently, the Exodus legislation sets forth the broad guideline stating that God requires Israel to make provisions for an asylum for the manslayer. God's instructions to Moses in Numbers 35 are designed to be carried out at a specific point in time as indicated by the temporal clause in v. 10 (יִ֖קְדָּֽשְׁ). The details outlined are to be implemented when Israel crosses into the land of Canaan.

Verses 11-15 indicate the purpose, number, and location of the cities. The city of refuge was to be a place where the manslayer who killed someone inadvertently might flee.16 The manslayer was to go to the city so that he would not be put to death by the avenger17 of blood until he had opportunity to


16 The Hebrew word הָעֶשֶׁרְ, meaning "unintentional," is used to "signify an inadvertent error or mistake arising from the routine experiences of daily living" Andrew E. Hill, "הָעֶשֶׁרְ," in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. William A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 4:42. The word is used frequently in the Pentateuch (often with the verb כֹּסֶף, to sin) to refer to the sacrifice which must be made for sins which were not committed in defiance of God, or high-handed sins.

17 According to Leviticus 25:47-49 the redeemer, who in this case acted on behalf of an impoverished Israelite, was a near relative. The responsibility of redemption or vengeance fell first to a brother,
stand trial before the congregation. Israel was to establish six such cities, three on each side of the Jordan River. They were to be for the use of any Israelite, resident alien, or sojourner.  

Verses 16-24 stipulate criteria for determining whether a killing qualifies as accidental or premeditated. The criteria for determining culpability concern the murder weapon and the killer's mental state. Several types of instruments might be used. Verse 16 states that if the killer used an iron implement, then he is a murderer and must be put to death. At this period in history, iron was employed only in the production of weapons, which would be a certain indication that the killing was intentional. Weapons or tools of stone or wood which could be held in one's hand and were potentially dangerous were also "considered. . . [to be] murder weapon[s] by definition" The type of weapon was important because it gave an indication of the killer's intent when he struck the victim.

Verses 20-22 indicate other possible means of death. These are means of death which do not so obviously indicate a hostile predisposition toward the victim, so the killer's psychological condition becomes a factor. If the victim was pushed to his death because of hatred, then the killing was punishable by death. If something was thrown at the victim from a concealed position (while "lying in wait"), then the killer was again judged guilty of murder since a deliberate act was involved. Verse 22 makes even the hands a possible murder

then an uncle, then a cousin, then finally any blood relative from his family.

18 The two Hebrew terms employed here, רג and הספר may refer to resident aliens with varying levels of attachment to the community, or they may function as virtually equivalent terms (function as a hendiadys).


20 Ashley, *Numbers*, 652.
weapon, providing that the killer struck down his victim because of hate.

Conversely, verses 23 -24 indicate evidence which will clear one of murder charges. If the death resulted from pushing or a thrown object, but there was no history of hostility between the individuals, then the killing should be ruled accidental. If a stone object was accidentally dropped on a person so that he died, then the killing was again ruled to be accidental.

The type of the weapon used and the state of mind of the killer are the key factors to determine for the adjudication of the legal case. The provision might apply to modern cases as follows. In a case where a pedestrian was shoved into a line of oncoming traffic, the killing would be ruled accidental if the killer merely stumbled and pushed his companion into a dangerous position. Had, however, there been previous hostility between the two, then he would be judged a murderer. A contemporary illustration of this might be a death caused by a gunshot wound. It would also be considered a murder because a gun is a weapon. The only exception might be on the basis of verse 23, which allows for an accidental death caused by a deadly object of stone. A hunting accident in which the shooter did not see an improperly dressed human would be an excellent example.

The congregation is the judge in such cases according to the above mentioned ordinances (v. 24). Should the killer be found guilty of murder, then he was to be put to death. If the congregation determined that the killing was accidental, then the killer was reprimanded to the city of refuge until the death of the high priest. After the death of the high priest, the manslayer would be free to return to his home. If, however, he were to venture from the city of refuge, he could be put to death by the avenger of blood, the next of kin of the deceased.

Verses 29-33 begin with an indication that the statements given are considered ordinances or binding judicial procedures. Verse 30 requires that the death penalty not be
carried out unless there is more than one witness. Presumably this might include circumstantial evidence as well as verbal testimony, although the text does not specifically state it. Verses 31-32 disallow any provision for a monetary settlement in lieu of the previously stated punishment for both the murderer and the manslayer. Verses 33-34 indicate that following the stipulations will be the only way to avoid polluting the land in which Yahweh dwells.

These provisions raise two questions. First, since the killing was accidental, why was the manslayer liable to any punishment at all? Greenberg explains that,

> it must first be recognized that whenever an innocent man is slain, the law considers the slayer guilty in a measure. The reason lies in the ultimate respect that the Scriptures have for human life and for the land as the dwelling place of Yahweh Himself: Shedding an innocent man's blood, even unintentionally, involved bloodguilt, and no manslayer was considered clear of this guilt."

The city of refuge therefore had a punitive as well as protective effect. This guilt is further borne out in that the man who was convicted only of manslaughter was safe from harm only as long as he stayed in the city. Were he to leave, the avenger of blood could execute him without fear of reprisal. This might also provide a necessary balance to the system. The system for determining the level of culpability relied in part upon determining the state of mind of the killer toward the victim. It is possible that hate was involved, but that it was a secret hate which was unknown to the congregation. It is therefore

possible that a guilty person might erroneously be proclaimed innocent. If this was indeed the intent of the law, then the confinement of the city of refuge functioned as a probationary period. Vashalz comments that,

> The innocence of the accused and his willingness to submit to proper authority was to be demonstrated by his remaining in the city of refuge as long as the High Priest lived. . . The Levitical city of refuge, then, was not a prison but a haven for those who could demonstrate a true regard for law and not a murderous spirit.  

It must be noted that the text nowhere states that this was the rationale for the legislation. Practically, however, the law would have had this effect.

The second question concerns the rationale for the death of the high priest marking the terminus of the confinement to the city of refuge. The most prominent theory is based on theological considerations. Since the shedding of blood defiled the land whether it was accidental or not, then a death was necessary in order to expiate and cleanse the land. Yahweh could not be satisfied in any other way. Since a person, made in the image of Yahweh, had been killed, an animal sacrifice was inappropriate. Due to his position, therefore, the high priest was the most logical candidate to secure this propitiation.  

It should be noted, however, that the text does not specifically

23 Robert Vasholz, "Israel's Cities of Refuge," *Presbyterian* 19 (Fall 1993): 117. Vasholz believes this stems from the judicial function of the High Priest in Israel (cf. Deuteronomy 17:9). His death, then would signal "the end of a judicial era and thus signal . . . amnesty for those confined to cities of refuge."

24 Ibid., 130.
state this and it is an exception to the provision for sacrifice that God made for all other types of unintentional sins.

The other possibility rests on a more practical consideration. It is more in line with the nature of the murder which was considered random in the case of involuntary manslaughter. Whereas "the deliberate homicide is deliberately put to death; the involuntary homicide who took life by chance must await the chance of the High Priest's death in order to be released from the asylum city."\(^{25}\) This in itself would have tended to limit the claimants to the protection of a city of refuge to those who really were innocent of murder. Anyone who claimed the protection of the city of refuge was admitting his guilt and his willingness to accept a confinement to the city of refuge which might last for years. Claimants to this protection might have done so merely out of fear for their own lives, but it is more likely that the innocent, law-abiding citizen would have done so. True criminals seek to avoid any punishment.

**Deuteronomy 4:41-43; 19:1-13.**

Deuteronomy 4:41-43 is a simple historical notation that Moses set up three cities of refuge on the east side of the Jordan River. The three cities, Bezer, Ramoth in Gilead, and Golan in Bashan were assigned to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the Manassites respectively. Their geographic distribution was therefore sufficiently wide to make them accessible to anyone on the east of the Jordan needing to use them.

Deuteronomy 19:1 begins the next relevant section with a temporal reference to the future time when Israel is settled in the land.\(^{26}\) The command to set aside three cities of refuge on

\(^{25}\) Milgrom, *Numbers*, 510.

\(^{26}\) The Hebrew, identical to Numbers 35:10, uses the subordinating conjunction "יָכָ֣ש" to indicate the temporal clause.
the west side of the Jordan is reiterated. Verse 3 lays upon the people the additional responsibility of preparing the roads leading to the cities. This command, in conjunction with the wide distribution of the cities throughout the land, insured that they would be easily accessible to anyone needing asylum. Verses 4-6 are a parenthetical statement of the conditions under which one may be granted asylum in a city of refuge. The information given is largely similar to that contained in Numbers 35 with one exception. There is a danger that the manslayer may be put to death because the journey to the city of refuge is too long, and this is obviously meant to be a justification for the number and location of the cities of refuge. Verses 8-10 add another qualification, noting that if Yahweh enlarges the territory of Israel in response to their careful attention to the details of the covenant, then they are to appoint three more cities within their territory to be cities of refuge. Verses 11-13 repeat the qualification that one guilty of premeditated murder must be put to death in order to secure the blessing of Yahweh upon the land. Thus the major contribution of this section is the responsibility of the nation to provide adequate places for the manslayer where he could flee to safety quickly. It was a national, not merely an individual, concern.

**Joshua 20:1-9**

In a style reminiscent of His dealings with Moses, God commanded Joshua to establish the previously prescribed cities of refuge. The purpose for the cities is again stated in verses 3-4 as providing a place of refuge from the avenger of blood for one who is guilty of manslaughter. The additional qualification is given that the one requesting such asylum must stand before the elders at the gate of the city to present his case. Whether or not an altar is involved in such proceedings is not stated. If they
determine that the slaying was indeed accidental, then he shall be granted asylum within the city.

The text then reiterates several more of the provisions of the law (the provisions protecting him from the avenger of blood and the stipulation that he may return to his own city after the death of the high priest). Verses 7-9 contain the names of the cities which were appointed as cities of refuge, including those which were appointed by Moses on the eastern side of the Jordan River. The location of each city, with the exception of the Reubenite city of Bezer, is fairly well established. They were evenly spread throughout the land and located along ancient highways. The distribution of the cities was in accordance with the Mosaic legislation and provided easy access for anyone who might need to flee to them.

References in the Historical Books

Unfortunately, the Bible contains no references to the use of the city of refuge for a manslayer. It does, however, contain several references to the concepts of asylum at the altar and bloodguilt. The first mention of asylum requested at the altar is in 1 Kings 1:50. After Solomon was crowned king, his main rival Adonijah requested asylum by grabbing hold of the horns of the altar. Though there is no loss of life involved, Adonijah's flight to the altar is consistent with the recognized use of the altar. Gray remarks that,

the fugitive from vengeance, having thus made contact with the part of the altar where union with God was effected by the blood of sacrifice, was regarded as . . . the protected sojourner of God . . . The hand of the
avenger was thus stayed till his case was considered
and settled if possible without bloodshed"\(^{27}\)

Thus Adonijah was simply afraid for his life and claimed the
protection of the altar and the right to a legal hearing of his
case.

1 Kings 2:28-33 records the second case. Here, Joab
requests asylum at the altar. It is possible that he requests such
asylum for the same reason as Adonijah: he was part of a rival
faction to the throne. If so, then the events are unrelated to the
legislation concerning the cities of refuge. It is, however,
possible that he feared Solomon would not hesitate as David
had to act against him for the murders of Abner and Amasa (2
Samuel 3 and 2 Samuel 20). Whatever Joab's motivation was,
Solomon's is perfectly clear. He refuses to grant asylum since
Joab’s case in no way qualifies him to receive the protection of
the altar. Though the events seem to be at variance with the
regulations to bring the accused before the elders and try him
there, it should be noted that a different system of government
existed in Israel at this time. The king functioned as a judicial
authority in the land,\(^{28}\) especially concerning matters of his own
court, and both David and Solomon have decreed that Joab
must be put to death as a murderer.

Several passages address the related concept of
bloodguilt. 2 Samuel 21 contains the record of a three-year
famine in Israel. When David inquired of the Lord concerning
the reason for the famine, he was told that it was because Saul
had massacred a number of Gibeonites with whom Israel had a

\(^{27}\) Jolm Gray, *I & II Kings*, The Old Testament Library

\(^{28}\) For example, I Kings 3:16-28 shows the king acting as a
Judge. Solomon's decision regarding the two prostitutes is declared to
be a נבשון. This word is used generally to refer to various aspects of
the judicial process.
non-aggression pact dating back to the time of Joshua. The second reference to bloodguilt is made by King Solomon after he orders the execution of Joab. He notes that the execution will "'take away the innocent blood, which Joab shed, from me, and from the house of my father' and that "'upon David, and upon his seed, and upon his house, and upon his throne, shall there be peace for ever from the LORD." The passages show that it was generally understood that guilt, which resulted from murder, would rob one from the blessing of Yahweh. One may conclude, therefore, that godly Israelites understood that the shedding of blood defiled the land in which Yahweh dwelled.

The primary motivation for the legislation concerning murder in general and the cities of refuge in particular was theological instead of humanitarian or social.

**Summary of City of Refuge Legislation**

It is now possible to summarize the legislation concerning cities of refuge. Altar asylum was a time-honored custom in the ancient Near East. It appears that the custom continued at least into the reign of Solomon as a claim for amnesty or protection for certain types of offenses. On the basis of Exodus 21, however, it was never to grant asylum privileges automatically. Such determinations had to be made on a case by case basis.

The city of refuge was established for the manslayer. Were one guilty of the crime, he had to immediately flee to one of six so designated cities. He may have requested asylum by grabbing hold of the altar and then being brought before the elders of the city of refuge or he may simply have gone directly to the elders as they sat in the gate (Joshua 20:4). If the elders believed he had a case which warranted granting of asylum privileges, then he was accepted into the city. He was to remain in the city until he was able to stand trial before the congregation, presumably of his own city (Joshua 20:6;
Numbers 35:24), so that he would not be put to death by the avenger of blood. The criteria used to determine the guilt of the killer were the type of weapon he used and his mental state toward the victim. Were he known to be guilty, then the elders of his own city were to send to the city of refuge and have him delivered to the avenger of blood so he would be put to death (Deuteronomy 19:12).

If he were judged to be guilty of manslaughter, then he was returned to his city of refuge, where he was to live until the death of the high priest. There was not possibility of parole from this banishment, nor was there the possibility of making a financial settlement with the family of the deceased; only the death of the high priest set him free. If he were to leave the city prematurely, then the avenger of blood could put him to death without fear of reprisal. The reason stated for the regulations is not to act as a deterrent to come, although it certainly functioned as such. Nor is it to maintain a sense of social justice within Israel, although it certainly did that as well. The specified reason is theological. Any shedding of innocent blood would defile the land in which Yahwah dwelled. The failure to execute a murderer would defile the land, for no other punishment was fitting for this crime. The execution of a manslayer would also pollute the land in which Yahweh dwelled, unless he was put to death because he left his city of refuge. This provision had the practical effect of a probationary period to determine the true character of the accused.

A Tentative Modern Application

The provision for cities of refuge has most recently been used as a justification for various sanctuary movements. Such

movements have provided a place of safety for those who may be in danger due to political, ethnic, or religious persecution in their own countries. The desire to protect innocent lives which motivates many members of the sanctuary movement certainly corresponds to the regulations for the cities of refuge which were designed to preserve the life of the manslayer and avoid shedding innocent blood (e.g. the manslayer was protected in the city; there were six such cities which also had to be easily accessible). God has always placed a high premium on the value of human life, so when it is endangered unjustly, it should be protected. It should be noted, however, this principle has been abused by those seeking to promote a particular political agenda in the United States. Since the city of refuge was for the use of the manslayer in a society where certain matters of justice were left in the hands of the individual, it would seem that the asylum city best supports the concept of due process. The farther any application strays from this purpose, the more likely it is to be in error.

The most obvious application comes in the realm of our judicial system. Making such applications is difficult. It must be remembered that the law was done away with on the cross and that Israel and the Church are dissimilar in many respects. It is also very unlikely that any modern government will pattern its procedures after Biblical law, so much of what is suggested here belongs to the realm of the theoretical. It should also be remembered that as a small largely agrarian society this system of justice worked better than it would work in modern

Ryan, "The Historical Case for the Right of Sanctuary?" Journal of Church and State 29 (Spring 1987): 209-32 for more information on these movements.

society. Yet the law was still the flawless revealed will of God and contains many principles which are reiterated in the New Testament. The theocracy as established by God qualifies as the best government ever established. In the one instance where God reached down into human history and established a government, this is the government that He established. It will encourage the individual Christian to see the order and justice of God as revealed in the law, as opposed to the system man has established. With these qualifications in mind, a brief analysis of modern legal concepts in light of God's can now proceed.

Modern jurisprudence is built on the belief that the accused is innocent until proven guilty. Every protection, therefore, is afforded to him. The city of refuge afforded this type of protection as well, but it was not automatic. The manslayer had to first get himself to the city of refuge. If he did not, or if he did not stay there until the death of the high priest, then he could be put to death without the avenger of blood incurring guilt. As such, confinement to the city functioned as a probationary period. Violation of the period was incurred for the simple act of leaving the city of refuge. This seems highly preferable to the modern system. The system established by God is fair to the accused without going too far to protect his rights. It realized that certain rights might be forfeited and prescribed a strong punishment if the defendant waived his protection to those rights.

The second comparison applies to certain trial procedures and the admissibility of evidence. The manslayer had to represent himself before the elders of the city of refuge and before the elders of his own city. Modern jurisprudence seeks to avoid producing incorrect verdicts by finding people

who do not know any of the details of a case and are supposedly unbiased. This system required the participation of those who knew the killer (the elders of his own city) and those who probably knew nothing about him (the elders of the city of refuge). The judges in this case were also the jury. Though anyone is subject to rendering a false judgment, the men put in charge of these matters were the ones who had the most experience and the respect of their communities.

The major difference is seen in the motivation driving the entire legal apparatus. Modern thought is tainted by the belief in the supremacy of man. The system is built on the concept that the highest good is to avoid punishing an innocent man and in the process allows the guilty to go free. This Old Testament system is driven from start to finish by the notion that murder pollutes the land in which Yahweh dwells. This system could and did break down. It could be abused as can any system. If the people were not faithful to the God of the covenant, then any system would not have worked anyhow. That is perhaps the greatest lesson to be learned. Only one who fears God will be scrupulous to punish the guilty with the proper punishment while letting the innocent go free.

Conclusion

City of Refuge laws were designed to punish the guilty and protect the innocent. It was important to follow the procedures laid down in order to have the blessing of God upon the nation. In practice, however, Israel probably followed this law about as well as it followed the rest of God's laws. There are ways in which the system could conceivably be abused. Abuses, however, cannot be attributed to any weakness in the system, but to the weakness of those who ran the system. On a personal level, Paul noted in Romans 7:8 that "sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence." Israel's failures in the consistent application of
the law are an extension of the principle which is visible on a much wider level. The main contribution of a study of the Old Testament, then, should be to cause the believer to look forward to the day when Christ reigns on earth and does apply all of His laws consistently in order to establish justice on earth.

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NEW LIGHT ON THE WILDERNESS JOURNEY
AND THE CONQUEST

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In the previous issue of GRACE JOURNAL (Winter, 1961), the writer set forth his conclusions regarding the time of the Oppression and the Exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt. Arguments were presented for a date around 1447 B.C. for the Exodus, during the Eighteenth Dynasty of Egypt (1570-1315 B.C.). This date can be further substantiated by the subsequent experiences of the Israelites under Moses and Joshua.

New Considerations Concerning the Wilderness Journey

The opposition of the Edomites.--One of the weightiest arguments in favor of the late date of the Exodus (13th century B.C.) is advanced by Nelson Glueck concerning the Edomites who denied passage through their territory to Moses and the Israelites. He has charged that no Edomite or Moabite kingdoms would have been encountered in Transjordan by Moses before the thirteenth century B.C. Not until that century did these peoples build houses and fortifications in Transjordan. He writes, "Not a site was discovered nor a sherd found which could be ascribed to Middle Bronze II or to Late Bronze" (Explorations in Eastern Palestine, II, Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research, XV, 138). Elsewhere he contends:

Had the Exodus through southern Transjordan taken place before the 13th century B.C., the Israelites would have found neither Edomite nor Moabite kingdoms,

well organized and well fortified, whose rulers could have given or withheld permission to go through their territories. Indeed, the Israelites, had they arrived on the scene first, might have occupied all of Edom and Moab themselves and left the land on the west side of the Jordan for late comers. --The Other Side of the Jordan (New Haven: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1940), pp. 146f.

First of all, we must accept the Biblical statement that it was not so much the superior strength of the Edomites and the Moabites that prevented the Israelites from crossing their territories as it was the direct command of Jehovah not to fight with these distant brethren of theirs (Deut. 2:4, 5, 9). It was God's sovereign plan that His chosen nation not settle in these areas but in Canaan primarily.

Second, while the Bible speaks of the king of Edom (Num. 20:14) and of various cities of Edomite kings (Gen. 36:32, 35, 39), these terms need not prove that the Edomites were yet a sedentary people dwelling in fortified towns. At that period the head of every tribe or city-state was called a king. The five kings of Midian (Num. 31:8) in Moses' day and the two kings of Midian. In Gideon's day (Jud. 8:5, 12) were surely nomadic chieftains, as was perhaps also Adoni-bezek who had subdued seventy kings (Jud. 1:3-7). The book of Joshua and the Amarna Letters both testify to the great number of petty kings of city states in Palestine around 1400 B.C. Nor does

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the word "city" mean necessarily a well-fortified site with permanent buildings, for Kadesh-barnea is called "a city in the uttermost of thy (i.e., Edom's) border" (Num. 20:16). The Israelites lived in and around Kadesh about thirty-seven years, and yet probably never erected any stone buildings it nor made and used much pottery. Their community was centered around the portable tabernacle; thus their's was a tent city. Likewise the Edomites may well have lived in similar tent cities. Note that when Moses sent forth the twelve spies into the territory of the Canaanites, he instructed them to detect "what cities they are that they dwell in, whether in camps or in strongholds" (Num. 13:9).

Third, a careful study of the location of Edom and Mount Seir in Genesis through Joshua seems to reveal that whereas Edom later on was in southern Transjordan, up through the time of the Conquest Esau and his descendants were living for the most part in the central Negeb, i.e., in the mountainous country with its valleys and oases between Kadesh-barnea and the Arabah. The key to the location of Mount Seir and Edom is the route which the children of Israel took after the Edomites turned down their request to be permitted to pass through Edom. First the Israelites journeyed to Mount Hor, probably a prominent point in the highlands (up to 3000') ten to fifteen miles east or northeast of Kadesh-barnea and on the border of Edom. This location of Mount Hor is likely because after Aaron died there and the congregation of Israel was still mourning for him, the king of Arad who dwelt farther north in the Negeb attacked them (Num. 20:22-21:3). The next part of their journey took them to the Gulf of Aqabah: "And they journeyed from Mount Hor by the way to the Red Sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way" (Num. 21:4; cf. Deut. 2:1-8). The Israelites had to go all the way to Ezion-geber (Deut. 2:8), for the Edomites were holding the west side of the Arabah, making stops at Punon and Oboth (Num. 33:42, 43; 21:5-10). Punon is probably to be identified with Feinan, the site of ancient copper mines, and is a logical place for the spot where Moses lifted up the copper serpent in the wilderness.

If the Edomites were living in the Negeb instead of in Transjordan at the time of the Exodus, is there any evidence of their existence in the more western area? According to Egyptian records from the 15th century B.C. there were peoples dwelling in the Negeb important enough to warrant an attack by the pharaoh's army. Thutmose III mentions the Negeb in the campaign list of his military operations (James Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, p. 243). Amen-em-heb, one of Thutmos's soldiers, had the following statement painted on the wall of his tomb at Thebes: "I made captives in the country of the Negeb" (*ANET*, p. 241). A century later Amarna Letter #256 mentions Udomu as a city or people seemingly in South Canaan in the area of Hebron-Beersheba (Samuel A.B. Mercer, *The Tell el-Amarna Tablets* Toronto: Macmillan Co., 1939 , II, 666; BASOR, #89, p. 14). Various scholars have identified Udomu with Edom.

The condition of the Moabites.--Two things relevant to the Moabites at the time of the wilderness journey lead one to believe that they were neither settled nor so strong as they were in the thirteenth and following centuries. First, Moab was much weaker than Israel and feared the latter greatly: "And Moab was sore afraid of the people, because they were many; and Moab was distressed because of the children of Israel" (Num. 22:2). Second, Moab was closely associated with the Midianites, so much so that the elders of both peoples acted as one group when they went to the town of Pethor to bring back Balaam (Num. 22:4-7). The Bible depicts the Midianites as largely a nomadic people. The point is this: for the Moabites to have been on such friendly terms with the Midianites, the former also were probably still largely nomadic, since from time imme-
morial there has been strife between the inhabitants of the desert and the residents of the towns in agricultural areas. Therefore the time of Moses must have been before the thirteenth century B.C. when the Moabites began to build permanent towns.

**New discoveries near Amman.**--Several recent finds in the vicinity of Amman, the capital city of the Kingdom of Jordan, tend to modify Glueck's sweeping statements that there was no settled occupation anywhere in Transjordan south of the Jabbok River between the eighteenth and thirteenth centuries B.C. Four tombs in Amman and one near Madeba discovered in the past decade or so contained hundreds of pottery vessels and scarabs and other objects from the periods known as Middle Bronze II and late Bronze I, i.e., from about 1800 to 1400 B.C. Also, in 1955, a building which appears to have been a Late Bronze Age temple with over 100 pieces of imported pottery of Cypriote and Mycenaean origin, was unearthed when bulldozers were clearing away a small mound by the airport of Amman. (G. Lankester Harding, *The Antiquities of Jordan* London: Lutterworth Press, 1959, p. 33). Thus it seems that there was some sedentary occupation in central Transjordan at the end of the fifteenth century B.C. On the other hand the apparent relative scarcity of population in southern Gilead around 1400 B.C. made Moses’ task of conquering that district considerably less difficult than it would have been in the thirteenth century B.C. when so many more cities existed. His campaigns against Sihon and Og lasted only a matter of months compared with the several years necessary for Joshua to subdue Canaan.

**The time of Balaam.**--In order to invite Balaam the prophet to come to curse Israel, Balak king of Moab sent messengers "to Pethor, which is by the River, to the land of the children of his people" (Num. 22:5). Pethor is the Hittite city of Pitru, captured by Thutmose III and much later on by Shalmaneser III; it lay on the western bank of the Euphrates River a little ways south of Carchemish. The Hebrew word for "his people" is *ammo*. W. F. Albright interprets this term as the name of the land called 'Amau in the inscription on the statue of Idri-mi found by Sir Leonard Woolley at Alalakh (Wm. F. Albright, "Some Important Discoveries, Alphabetic Origins and the Idri-mi Statue," BASOR, #118, p. 16). Idri-mi also found sons of the land of 'Amau and sons of the land of Halep (Aleppo) in the land of Canaan when he went into exile there for seven years. Thus it is not surprising to read of Balaam’s coming from such a distance (350 miles) to Moab in the fifteenth century B.C. As to the date of Idri-mi, Albright dates the statue about 1450 B.C., but Woolley and Sidney Smith date it about 1375 B.C. The land of 'Amau is also mentioned in an inscription from the tomb of an officer who served in the army of Amenhotep II (Ibid., p. 15). My argument is this: if Balaam prophesied at the end of the fifteenth century B.C., according to the early date of the Exodus, then the term 'Amau in Num. 22:5 is found in a proper historical context, along with the occurrences of this name in the Idri-mi inscription and the Egyptian text. Only around 1400 B.C. was the Aleppo-Carchemish region--the land of 'Amau--independent and not under the rule of either the Egyptians or the Hittites. During the reign of Amenhotep III (1410-1372 B.C.) northern Syria was able to free itself from Egyptian overlordship, while the Hittites under Suppiluliumas did not conquer this area until about 1370 B.C. But if the Exodus happened in the thirteenth century, then the homeland of Balaam was under Hittite control and would probably have been called "the land of the Hittites" (cf. Josh. 1:4; Jud. 1-26).

**New Excavations in Old Canaan**

**Jericho.**--The first fortress city in Canaan which faced the Israelites after they crossed the Jordan River was Jericho. The date of the destruction of Jericho should provide an excellent
check on the chronology adopted for the Exodus and the Conquest, whether around 1407 B.C. or about 1250 B.C. But the date as determined by archaeological methods has become one of the most hotly-contested issues among Palestinian archaeologists.

Both Sir John Garstang, who dug at Jericho from 1930 to 1936, and Miss Kathleen Kenyon, who has been directing a new series of excavations there since 1952, agree that the Middle Bronze Age levels, Garstang's City III, represent Hyksos occupation ending about 1550 B.C. Both recognize remains from the late Bronze Age, but at that point the agreement ceases. We must be ready and willing to admit that Miss Kenyon's careful investigations disproved that the parallel fortification walls, built of mud bricks and fallen outwards, belonged to the late Bronze Age city, as Garstang claimed so loudly (Garstang, John and J.B.E., *The Story of Jericho*, 2nd ed. rev. London: Marsha", Morgan & Scott, 1948 , pp. 133-142). But this does not mean that there were no walls to the Canaanite city in Joshua's time. In the light of the fact that the mound of Jericho, Tell es-Sultan, has suffered severely from erosion caused by the hard winter rains, the absence now of such walls may in a way be a confirmation of Scripture. Joshua 6:20 states that the wall fell down flat, or, in its place. Since the wall was probably made of mud bricks, after it fell and the city lay unoccupied for the most part until Hiel rebuilt the city in the time of King Ahab (I Kings 16:43, there was nothing to cover the fallen bricks and to prevent their turning back to mud and washing down the slope.

There can be no doubt, however, that there was occupation of the site of Jericho in the late Bronze Age. Garstang's expeditions discovered in 26 tombs that contained deposits, some 320 late Bronze Age objects out of a total of 2818 specimens including two scarab seals of Amenhotep III (1410-1372 B.C.); also he found late Bronze potsherds in the fosse (moat) and on the mound especially in debris underlying the isolated "Middle Building" (which Garstang attributed to Eglon--Jud. 3:12ff). In 1954 Miss Kenyon uncovered on the eastern side of the mound the foundations of a single house wall with about a square meter of intact floor beside it; on the floor was a small bread oven beside which was a juglet that she says is probably fourteenth century in date. She believes the evidence accords with a destruction and subsequent abandonment of the site, and suggests a date in the second half of the fourteenth century B.C. (*Archaeology in the Holy Land* London: Ernest Benn, 1960, pp. 210f). At any rate, G. E. Wright's statement seems totally unwarranted: "All that remains which can be assigned with any confidence to the period between 1400 and 1200 B.C. are a few pieces of pottery from three tombs and from the area above the spring, and perhaps the 'Middle Building'" (*Biblical Archaeology* Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957 , p. 79). Garstang did competent, accurate work on the whole. Miss Kenyon speaks very highly of the fullness of his records (Kathleen M. Kenyon, "Some Notes on the History of Jericho in the 2nd Millennium B.C.", *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, LXXXIII 1951, 122f). The Israeli archaeologist, Immanuel Ben-Dor, who was on Garstang's staff at Jericho, told me personally that much late Bronze pottery was found in the tombs and a good bit of it on the tell itself.

All the evidence so far available seems to suggest that the Hyksos city of Jericho was destroyed by fire about 1550 B.C., presumably by the pursuing Egyptians. Then the mound lay vacant for about 150 years. Since most of the typically fifteenth century forms of pottery are lacking, reoccupation could hardly have taken place much before 1410. Probably the Canaanites re-used the Hyksos rampart or glacis; this is the conclusion of Miss Kenyon and of Yigael Yadin, the director of the current excavations at Hazor. On the rampart they may or may not have built their own mud brick wall. The reason not more late Bronze pottery has been found may be that the city
was re-occupied such a short time before its divine demolition—this, together with the completeness of the destruction (Josh. 6:21, 24) and the exposure of most of this stratum to erosion.

Shechem.--As soon as the army of Israel had burned Ai, Joshua led the nation northward more than twenty miles to establish God’s covenant with Israel as the law of the land in a ceremony between the two mountains Ebal and Gerizim (Josh. 8:30-35). In order to arrive at the natural amphitheater between the hills the Israelites had to go past the stronghold of Shechem, less than a mile to the east. Years later, Joshua convened all the leaders of the nation at Shechem to renew their covenant commitment to Jehovah (chap. 24). Excavations at Tell Balatah in the last few years clearly confirm that Shechem was inhabited during the Late Bronze Age. (G. Ernest Wright, "The Second Campaign at Tell Balatah Shechem," BASOR, 11148, 21t). In 1926 two cuneiform tablets were unearthed by German archaeologists at Shechem; they were both written about 1400 B.C. (Wm. F. Albright, "A Teacher to a Man of Shechem about 1400 B.C.,” BASOR, #86, 28-31). Nor does there seem to have been any widespread destruction of the city and its temple between its capture by the Egyptians about 1500 B.C. and its burning by Abimelech around 1150 B.C. (Jud. 9:49, cf. Edw. F. Campbell, Jr., "Excavation at Shechem, 1960"; Robert J. Bull, "A Re-examination of the Shechem Temple,” The Biblical Archaeologist, XXIII 1960,101-119). Since Joshua did not attack Shechem, the city must have been in friendly hands. Several of the Amarna letters declare that around 1380 B.C. Lab'ayu the prince of Shechem was in league with the invading Habiru. Certainly we cannot equate the Israelite Hebrews with the Habiru bands wherever they are mentioned in clay tablets throughout the Near East in the second millennium B.C., and probably not every mention of the Habiru in the Amarna Tablets refer to Israelites. But in this case of Lablayu the Israelite Hebrews may be his confederates, stigmatized as Habiru by pro-Egyptian neighboring kings. In fact, some of the Shechemites could possibly even have been descendants of Jacob, whose ancestors had left Egypt in small numbers subsequent to Jacob’s death. That some Israelites actually did go back to Canaan is indicated in I Chron. 7:24. I do not mean to imply, however, that one or more entire tribes of Israel left Egypt in some other exodus before the time of Moses.

Gibeon.--Before 1960 James B. Pritchard, director of the highly successful excavations at Gibeon, had discovered no conclusive evidence of Late Bronze occupation of the site of el-Jib. But in July 1960 an Arab woman revealed in her vineyard the presence of twelve shaft tombs cut in the rock. According to the pottery imported from Cyprus and Syria, the tombs range in date from the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age to the end of the late Bronze period (James B. Pritchard, "Seeking the Pre-Biblical History of Gibeon," The Illustrated London News, Sept. 24, 1960, pp. 518f). Since Gibeon did not fall to the Israelites, however, no help in settling the controversy concerning the date of the Conquest can be expected from that site in the future.

Hazor.--After Joshua had pursued the Canaanites in three directions from the waters of Merom he turned back and took Hazor. He killed Jabin king of Hazor and set fire to the city (Josh. 11:10f). Hazor was undoubtedly the largest city in all of Canaan; its site, Tell el-Qedah and the adjacent lower city, stretches for 1000 yards from north to south and averages 700 yards in width covering an area of about 183 acres. It could accommodate 30,000-40,000 people in an emergency with all their horses and chariots.

There is no need to confuse the two accounts concerning two kings of Hazor named Jabin. Those who try to harmonize the account in Joshua 11 with the one in Judges 4, 5 are those who
accept a late date for the Exodus and the Conquest. They feel compelled to combine the two Israelite victories into one campaign and the two Jabins into one man because of the shortness of the time allotted by them to the period of the Judges. Yet the same scholars would not claim that Rameses II and Rameses III of Egypt must be one ruler because they have the same name. Biblical history requires that in interpreting the archaeological evidence from Hazor one must assign a later Canaanite level to the time of Deborah and Barak than the level which he assigns to the time of Joshua. Therefore, since the last Canaanite city in the vast enclosure to the north of the mound of the acropolis had been destroyed, not to be reoccupied, in the thirteenth century B.C., this last city must be the one in which Jabin of Judges 4 resided. This date agrees well with a date around 1240 to 1220 B.C. for Deborah's battle against Sisera.

In the fourth season of excavations at Hazor, Yadin found what may well be evidence of Joshua's burning of the city. In Area K he and his staff excavated the gate of the Lower City. The gate in the Late Bronze period was erected on the foundations of the earlier Middle Bronze Age II gate, and is identical in plan. Yadin writes:

This gate must have been destroyed in a violent conflagration, though the exterior walls still stand to a height of nine feet. Traces of the burnt bricks of its inner walls and the ashes of the burnt beams still cover the floors in thick heaps. The evidence suggests that this destruction occurred before the final destruction of Hazor by the Israelites, but this problem remains to be studied. --Yigael Yadin, "The Fourth Season of Excavation at Hazor," The Biblical Archaeologist, XXII (1959), 8f.

One may wonder why or how the Canaanites regained control of Hazor after the time of Joshua. This question can be answered by pointing out that in his southern campaign Joshua did not attempt to occupy the cities whose inhabitants and kings he killed. At the end of that campaign "Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, unto the camp to Gilgal" (Josh. 10:43), evidently leaving no garrisons in the cities to hold them. Furthermore, in the cases of Hebron and Debir it is stated that these cities had to be recaptured (Josh. 15:13-17). Joshua's method of warfare seems to have been a series of lightning-like raids against key Canaanite cities, with the purpose of destroying the fighting ability of the inhabitants, not necessarily of besieging and actually capturing and settling the cities which he attacked (see Josh. 10:19f and 10:33 with 16:10 re the king of Gezer). It must be remembered that Joshua burned none of those cities except Jericho, Ai, and Hazor (11:13).

Upper Galilee and Asher.--In conclusion, let me describe some startling new evidence which has appeared, not at the tell of some important ancient city, but at numerous small unnamed sites in Galilee. In 1953 an Israeli archaeologist, Yohanan Aharoni, conducted a systematic survey of an area in Upper Galilee lying chiefly in the south-western section of the territory of Naphtali. Sixty-one ancient sites were examined, and he and his associates made two trial digs. He reports that a chain of eight Bronze Age towns, presumably Canaanite, lay along the present Israeli-Lebanese border in less hilly and more fertile territory; and that nineteen small Iron Age settlements--sometimes only a mile apart--were situated in the heavily forested higher mountains in the southern part of Upper Galilee. At these latter sites his expedition found a "special sort of large jar with thickened rim and plastic ornament, made of gritty clay." In a trial dig at Khirbet Tuleil he discovered in the lowest stratum not a sherd from the Late Bronze Age; rather he found examples of those large jars in situ, together with other types of pottery somewhat analogous to vessels from
Megiddo level VII and Tell el-Ful (Gibeah). Aharoni is of the opinion that this pottery type, dating from the 13th-12th centuries B.C., was introduced by the invading Northern Israelite tribes who took over areas not very suitable for settlement in the harsh mountains where there was no Canaanite population (Y. Aharoni, "Problems of the Israelite Conquest in the light of Archaeological Discoveries," *Antiquity and Survival*, II 1957, 146-149. Since Megiddo VII is usually dated about 1350-1150 B.C., we may date the beginning of these Iron Age I settlements in Upper Galilee as early as 1300 B.C. This date, then, would agree with the reference to the territory of a people called ‘Asaru or Asher in an inscription of Seti I, dating about 1310 B.C. According to a book review by B. S. J. Isserlin (*Journal of Semitic Studies*, IV 1959, 279f.) of Aharoni's book, *The Settlement of the Israelite Tribes in Upper Galilee*, published in Hebrew in 1957, Aharoni readily admits that Israelite infiltration began at least as early as the period of Seti I in the 14th century B.C.

It must be remembered that Joshua returned to Gilgal after defeating Jabin and burning Hazor, without occupying any towns or territory in Galilee. Thus, when Naphtali and Asher received their tribal allotments and migrated northward, they found that the Canaanites had reoccupied their cities and resumed control of most of Upper Galilee. The Israelite tribesmen therefore lived in tents for a century or more until they began to clear fields in the forests and build towns in the mountainous part of Galilee. The fact that Israelite remains as early as 1300 B.C. have been discovered in Upper Galilee is one more argument against a thirteenth century date for the Exodus and the Conquest. Let us remember that the Bible over and over again indicates that all the tribes entered Canaan together; thus, if Asher was in Palestine by the fourteenth century, then all the tribes must have been there also.

The Silence concerning Egypt

*The objection.*--Those who favor the late date of the Exodus and of the Conquest make much of the fact that contact with Egypt throughout the time of Joshua and the Judges is seldom if ever mentioned in the sacred text. They claim that Palestine was effectively controlled by the Egyptians as one of their provinces from Thutmose III at least through the reign of Rameses II (1301-1234 B.C.). Therefore they say it was impossible or at least very improbable that the Israelites could have taken possession of Canaan until the reign of Merneptah (1234-1222 B.C.), who mentioned crushing Israel along with certain cities in Palestine in his hymn of victory. This was inscribed on a stela found in the ruins of his mortuary temple at Thebes by Flinders Petrie in 1896. In reply it may be pointed out that in the book of Judges there are two references to the Egyptians (6:8, 9; 10:11). While these mentions probably refer to that people at the time of the Exodus, they may also include later attempts by Egypt to subjugate parts of Israel.

*The probable solution.*--J. W. Jack has discussed this whole problem thoroughly and sanely in his book *The Date of the Exodus*. He demonstrates from the evidence in the Amarna letters that beginning around 1400 B.C. in the reign of Amenhotep III (1410-1372 B.C.), Egypt's hold on her Asiatic possessions weakened and that Palestine and Syria soon were lost to the pharaoh. The weakness and lack of concern on the part of the Egyptians continued for over three quarters of a century, thus giving ample time to the Israelite invaders to get a foothold in the land of Canaan.

Beginning again with the Nineteenth Dynasty pharaohs (whose records can be read on the walls of their great temples at Thebes), Egyptian armies once marched northward into Palestine.
Seti I (1313-1301 B.C.) led his forces up the coast of Palestine and captured the towns of the Plain of Esdraelon (Armageddon). Taking the bastion-city of Beth-shan, he made it a garrison town for Egyptian troops; he erected at least two stelae of his in that city. From there he crossed the Jordan River and turned northward again to the Lebanon Mountains and the cities of the Orontes Valley. His son, the great Rameses II, re-established Egyptian authority in many a Palestinian town, but these were all in the Maritime Plain and the Shephelah (the Judean foothills), which were not actual Israelite territory at the time, or at least not continuously held by the Jews till long afterward. While Merneptah listed Israel along with the cities of Ashkelon, Gezer, and Yenoam in the land of Canaan, he gave no names of any distinctly Israelite towns as having been captured or sacked, which seems to show that he, no more than his father Rameses, penetrated into what was Israelite territory. In the Twentieth Dynasty Rameses III (1195-1164 B.C.) pursued the retreating "Sea Peoples," whom he had repulsed in their attempted invasion of the Nile Delta, along the Mediterranean coast into Syria. He seems to have made no attempt, however, to recapture the coastal towns. Gaza alone, so far as his records show, fell into his hands. Before the end of his reign Egypt was compelled to abandon the whole of her Asiatic dependencies.  

The facts just recited do not furnish reason to say that Palestine was reconquered by the kings of the Nineteenth Dynasty and made so thoroughly an Egyptian province that the Conquest could not well have begun until the latter part of the reign of Rameses III -- or even of Rameses II. Sir Flinders Petrie's remarks were too hasty when he wrote: "The Egyptians were incessantly raiding Palestine down to 1194 B.C., and yet there is absolutely no trace of Egyptian action in the whole period of the Judges, which shows that the entry into Canaan must be after that date." Jack presents a number of arguments to demonstrate that the Israelites could have been in the land of Canaan from 1400 B.C. onward without there being any necessity of mentioning contact with Egyptians during the period of Joshua and the Judges.  

(1) After Joshua's campaigns or raids to exterminate much of the wicked population of Canaan in obedience to the command of Jehovah, the actual settlement in Palestine by the Israelites took place only gradually and slowly. The names of the towns which could not be conquered and consequently were left for a long period in control of the Canaanites make a surprising list. The inspired record in Judges 1 includes Jerusalem (v. 21), Beth-shan, Taanach, Dor, Ibleam, Megiddo, Gezer, Kitron, Nahalol, Acco, Sidon, Ahab, Achzib, Helbah, Aphik, Rehob, Beth-shemesh (in Naphtali's portion), Beth-anath, Aijalon, and Shaalbim. The Israelites, then, at least until after the time of Rameses III, were residing chiefly in the hill country, removed from the coastal plain along which the pharaohs were wont to march.  

(2) The campaigns of Seti I, Rameses II, and Rameses III were directed mainly against the Syrians and the Hittites to the north of Palestine. From the names of towns and districts mentioned in their records of their marches it seems that the Egyptian armies kept as much as possible to the military route along the Mediterranean coast. There is no indication that they invaded the high central ridge of the land of Canaan south of Megiddo and Beth-shan.  

(3) Even supposing that the Egyptians did make some attacks on Israel or repulse some Israelite raids on their positions along their line of march--such as the victory which Merneptah claimed over Israel the fact that the book of Judges made no clear references to such does not afford any valid argument against the early-date theory. No one would claim that the Hebrew records of the time of the Judges are a complete account of every battle and skirmish in which every tribe of Israel participated.
(4) Some of the encounters which the tribes of Israel had with the Canaanites and Amorites (Jud. 1-5) may have been instigated by Egypt, for it is well established that the pharaohs used native levies and mercenaries to maintain control in their provinces. As Jack says, "The struggling Israelites in the heart of the land were beneath the notice of the main Egyptian armies, and could be safely left to the soldiery of the tributary princes to deal with."  

In general throughout the long period of the Judges Israel had little contact with the Egyptians. The pharaohs marched along the coast and through the Valley of Esdraelon, whose cities the Israelites could not capture from the Canaanites at least until the time of Deborah. Concerning any times when the Egyptians did meet the Hebrews, it was not in the purpose of the writer of the book of Judges to mention them in any detail. The Egyptians were never one of the main adversaries of Israel after the days of Moses. Thus no valid objection to the early date of the Exodus and the Conquest can rightfully be made on the basis of the reputed silence in the book of Judges about Egyptian campaigns in Palestine during the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties.

**DOCUMENTATION**

1. E.g., Melvin Grove Kyle, "Exodus: Date and Numbers (Alternative View)," *ISBE*, II, 1056A.
6. Ibid., p. 84.

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THE MOSAIC LAW
AND THE THEOLOGY OF THE PENTATEUCH

JOHN H. SAILHAMER

I. Introduction
THE purpose of this article is to raise the question of the role of the Mosaic Law in the theology of the Pentateuch. By "theology of the Pentateuch," I mean the major themes and purposes that lie behind its final composition.

1. The Final Composition of the Pentateuch

Much has been written in recent years about the final composition of the Pentateuch. In an earlier paper, I attempted to demonstrate the influence of prophetic hope and eschatology in its composition. The Pentateuch, I argued, represents an attempt to point to the same hope as the later prophets, namely, the New Covenant. "The narrative texts of past events are presented as pointers to events that lie yet in the future. Past events foreshadow the future." Along similar lines, though working from quite different assumptions, Hans-Christoph Schmitt has argued that the Pentateuch is the product of a unified compositional strategy that lays great emphasis on faith. According to Schmitt, the same theme is found within the composition of the prophetic books, like Isaiah, and ultimately can be traced into the NT, e.g., the Book of Hebrews.

Schmitt's approach differs from many critical approaches in that he treats the Pentateuch as one would the later historical books, that is, as the

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3 This does not necessarily imply that the final composition of the Pentateuch is later than that of the prophetic books. On the contrary, if the composition of the Pentateuch were dated before that of the prophetic books, it would help explain the origin of the message of those books. In the discussion which follows, the date of the final composition of the Pentateuch as such is taken to be Mosaic.
4 Sailhamer, "The Canonical Approach," 311.
product of an intentional theological redaction or composition. One must start from the final form of the book and ask what each part of the whole contributes to its theological intention. Schmitt argues that each major unit of narrative in the Pentateuch shows signs of a homogeneous theological redaction. A characteristic feature of this redaction is the recurrence of the terminology of "faith" (e.g. ב נאמה). At crucial compositional seams throughout the Pentateuch, Schmitt is able to find convincing evidence of a "faith theme," that is, a consistent assessment of the narrative events in light of the rule of "faith" (ב נאמה). According to Schmitt, this redaction represents the final stages in the composition of the Pentateuch--later even than the so-called priestly redaction. According to Schmitt, it does not reflect an emphasis on keeping the priestly law codes (viz., the Mosaic Law) but rather on preserving a sense of trust in God and an expectation of his work in the future. It is in light of this eschatological expectation of God's future work that the redaction lays great stress on "faith."

Schmitt's study goes a long way in demonstrating an important part of the theological intention and orientation of the Pentateuch as a narrative text. Put simply, Schmitt shows that the Pentateuch is intended to teach "faith" in God. An important question raised by Schmitt's study is whether the concept of "faith" in the Pentateuch is intended to stand in opposition to the

6 The largest literary units (grosseren Einheiten) which are linked in the final redaction of the Pentateuch, according to Schmitt, are the Primeval History, the Patriarchal Narratives, the Exodus Narratives, the Sinai Narratives, and the Wilderness Narratives. See Rendtorff, Das Uberlieferungs-geschichtliche Problem, 19ff.

7 It is important to note that, according to Schmitt, the terminology of "faith" (ב נאמה) occurs only at the redactional seams. See n. 8.

8 The key texts of that redaction are Gen 15:6, "And Abraham believed in [ב נאמה] the Lord and he reckoned it to him for righteousness"; Exod 4:5, "In order that they might believe [ב נאמה] that the Lord, the God of their fathers . . . has appeared to you"; Exod 14:31, "And they [the people] believed in [ב נאמה] the Lord and in Moses his servant"; Num 14:11, "How long will they [the people] not believe in [ב נאמה] me"; Num 20:12, "And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, 'Because you did not believe in [ב נאמה] me.' " See also Deut 1:32 and 9:23. Schmitt has not discussed Gen 45:26, the only occurrence of the term for "faith" outside of Schmitt's redactional seams, because it does not show other signs of belonging to the "Glaubens-Thematik."


10 It is important to note that such a reading of the Pentateuch, as a lesson on faith, can be found throughout the subsequent canonical literature. Pss 78 and 106, two psalms that look at the meaning of the whole of the Pentateuch, both read the events of the Pentateuch as evidence of the Israelites' faith or faithlessness (cf. Ps 78:22, 32, 37; 106:12, 24). A similar reading is found in Nehemiah 9, which is a rehearsal of the pentateuchal narrative in its present form (cf. Neh 9:8). The example of Hebrews 11 has already been pointed out.
Mosaic Law or whether this faith is to be understood simply as "keeping the law."\textsuperscript{11} To say it another way, can we find evidence in the composition of the Pentateuch that the author is concerned with the question of "faith versus works of the law"?

It is well known that this issue surfaces a number of times in other OT texts. In Ps 51:18-19 (English vv. 16-17), for example, David says, "For thou hast no delight in sacrifice. . . . The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit" and in Mic 6:6-8 it says, "With what shall I come before the Lord. . . Shall I come before him with burnt offerings? He has showed you, O man, what is good . . . to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" Since such texts do, in fact, exist within the OT, we may, with some justification, look for similar ideas within the theological macrostructure of the Pentateuch.

In the present article, we will attempt to show that the issue of "faith versus works of the law" was, indeed, central to the theological purpose of the Pentateuch. Specifically, we will argue that, among other things, the Pentateuch is an attempt to contrast the lives of two individuals, Abraham and Moses. Abraham, who lived before the law (\textit{ante legem}), is portrayed as one who kept the law, whereas Moses, who lived under the law (\textit{sub lege}), is portrayed as one who died in the wilderness because he did not believe. If such a contrast between faith and works is, in fact, a part of the compositional strategy of the Pentateuch, then we may rightfully conclude that part of the purpose of the book was to show not merely the way of faith, but also the weakness of the law.

\textbf{2. The Genre of the Pentateuch}

In a recent article, Rolf Knierim has focused attention on the question of the genre of the Pentateuch as a whole.\textsuperscript{12} Knierim has argued that the Pentateuch consists of two major generic sections: Genesis and Exodus-Deuteronomy. According to him, Genesis is to be taken as an introduction to the whole of the Pentateuch. The genre of the central section of the Pentateuch, Exodus-Deuteronomy, is not so much that of a narrative history of Israel, as is commonly supposed in biblical scholarship, but rather its genre is that of a biography, specifically, a biography of Moses.

This is not the place to enter into a full discussion of Knierim's description of the genre of the Pentateuch. It is enough to say that his general observations about the Pentateuch are convincing. The Pentateuch devotes

\textsuperscript{11} There are indications in Schmitt's study that the notion of faith in the Pentateuch is put in opposition to that of "obedience to the law." Schmitt has argued, for example, that the "faith" seams overlay and reinterpret the narratives which have stressed obedience to the law (cf. comments below on Num 20:12).

\textsuperscript{12} Knierim, "The Composition of the Pentateuch," 395-415.
its attention more to the individual Moses than to the nation of Israel. Hence its overall purpose in all likelihood should be understood in relationship more to the life of Moses, per se, than to the history of the nation. As such it is reasonable to conclude that the Pentateuch reads much like and apparently aims to be a biography.

Since the purpose of a biography is the presentation or conceptualization of the work or life of an individual person, the Pentateuch can well be viewed generically as a presentation (conceptualization) of the work of Moses. The events of the life of Moses (Vita Mosis) are not told entirely for their own sake but are intended as a narrative explication of the nature of a life lived within the context of the call of God and the covenant at Sinai. The Pentateuch seeks to answer the question of how well Moses carried out his calling, that is, his work under the Sinai covenant. It seeks to tell how well he performed his task.

There is room for doubt, however, whether Knierim's description of the whole of the Pentateuch as a biography of Moses is entirely adequate. In the first place, the whole of the collections of laws which make up a major part of the final composition of the Pentateuch do not fit within the narrow limits of a biography. However, according to Knierim's reckoning, these laws, e.g., the Sinai-pericope and Deuteronomy, make up 68.5 percent of the total text of the Pentateuch. Although Knierim treats these legal sections as part of the Moses texts, they clearly are not part of the Moses narratives per se. The course of the narratives is distinctively broken into and suspended until these large collections of laws are exhausted. It appears that in the final stage of the composition, the focus on Moses, the individual lawgiver, has been intentionally expanded to include a substantial portion of the law itself. This state of affairs raises the question of why, in light of the genre of the Pentateuch, these laws were placed in the midst of the biography.

The traditional answer to this question has been that they were put there simply as legislation, that is, as laws which were to be kept—thus the Pentateuch's reputation as a "Book of the law." In this view the Pentateuch is read as if it were a collection of laws intended to guide the daily living of its readers. This view of the purpose of the laws in the Pentateuch is so pervasive that it is often, if not always, merely assumed in works dealing with the problem of the law.

However, it is also possible that the Pentateuch has intentionally included this selection of laws for another purpose, that is, to give the reader an understanding of the nature of the Mosaic Law and God's purpose in giving it to Israel. Thus it is possible to argue that the laws in the Pentateuch are not there to tell the reader how to live but rather to tell the reader how Moses was to live under the law. To use an example from the Pentateuch itself, it is clear to all that the detailed instructions on the building of the ark in Genesis 6 were not given to the reader so he or she could build an ark and load it with animals, but those detailed instructions were given to show what Noah was
to do in response to God's command. Competent readers of the Pentateuch easily understand that God's instructions to Noah in the narrative is directed only to Noah and not to the readers. These instructions are included as narrative information for the reader. The message of the Pentateuch in other words, is not that its readers should build an ark like Noah.

The same may be true for the legal instructions found in the Mosaic Law. Though the nature of the instructions to Noah and those to Moses (the building of the tabernacle in Exodus 25ff., for example) are similar in form and narrative function, we often read them entirely differently. We read the instructions to Noah as given for the reader, and those to Moses as given to the reader. It is possible, however, that the two sets of instructions within the Pentateuch are intended to be read in the same way. In other words, to put it in the terms introduced into OT studies by Mendenhall, the inclusion of the selection of laws (viz., the Mosaic Law) in the Pentateuch was not so much intended to be a source for legal action (technique) as rather a statement of legal policy.

This understanding of the purpose of the laws in the Pentateuch is supported by the observation that the collections of laws in the Pentateuch appear to be incomplete and selective. The Pentateuch as such is not designed as a source of legal action. That the laws in the Pentateuch are incomplete is suggested by the fact that many aspects of ordinary community life are not covered in these laws. Moreover, there is at least one example in the Pentateuch where a "statute given to Moses by the Lord" is mentioned but not actually recorded in the Pentateuch. The selective

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13 "From the earliest days of the church Christians have asked about the commands of the Old Testament: do they apply to us? The question, however, is ambiguous. It may be a question about authority, or it may be a question about prescriptive claim. A prescription, we said, instructs somebody to do, or not to do, something. We may ask in each case who is instructed and who instructs. If, as I walk down the street, somebody in a blue coat says, 'Stop!', I shall have to ask, first, 'Is he speaking to me?'--the question of claim--and, then, 'Is he a policeman?'--the question of authority. And so it is with the commands of the Old Testament: we must ask, 'Do they purport to include people like us in their scope?'--the question of claim--and, 'If so, ought we to heed them?'--the question of authority. In the patristic church, after the rejection of the Gnostic temptation, especially in its Marcionite form, the question of authority was not really open for discussion; Old Testament commands were evaluated entirely in terms of their claim. Our own age, conversely, has been so dominated by the question of authority that the question of claim has been obscured and forgotten" (O. M. T. O'Donovan, "Towards an Interpretation of Biblical Ethics," TynBul 27 [1976] 58-59).

14 "That common body of what might be called the sense of justice in a community we shall call 'policy'. What happens in a law court, however, is usually much more directly related to the technical corpus of specialized legal acts and tradition. These are techniques" (George E. Mendenhall, "Ancient Oriental and Biblical Law," The Biblical Archaeologist Reader 3 [ed. E. E Campbell and D. N. Freedman; New York: Anchor, 1958] 3).

15 The "statute of the law that the Lord gave Moses," referred to by Eleazar in Num 31:21, is not found elsewhere in the Pentateuch, though a part of what Eleazar commands (the water of cleansing) was given in Numbers 19. This shows either that the laws included in the Pentateuch are selective, that is, not every law given to Moses was included, or that any law
nature of the laws included in the Pentateuch is further illustrated both by
the fact that the number of laws (611) is the same as the numerical equiv-
alent of the Hebrew title of the Pentateuch, "Torah" (תורת), and by the
fact that within the structure of the collections of laws the number seven
and multiples of seven predominate. The listing of 42 (7 x 6) laws in the
Covenant Code (Exod 21:1-23:12), for example, equals the numerical value
of the title of that section "And these (are the judgments)." This is not to
suggest that secret numerical codes were intended to conceal mysteries
within these texts. The use of the numerical values of titles and catch
phrases was a common literary device at the time of the composition of
Scripture. The same principle of numerical selectivity may also be seen
within the Book of Proverbs, where the total number of proverbs in chaps.
10:1-22:16 (375) equals the numerical value of the name "Solomon." This
suggests that, just as in the publication of law in the ancient Near
Eastern world in general, the laws in the Pentateuch were not intended
to be used in the administration of justice as a collection of laws to be
enforced.

In his study of law codes in the ancient world, F. R. Kraus has provided
a helpful analogy to the nature and purpose of the laws included in the final
composition of the Pentateuch. According to Kraus, literary works such as
the Code of Hammurapi were not intended to be used in the actual adminis-
tration of law. They were not, in fact, associated with the systems of justice
in the ancient world. According to Kraus, they were rather intended to tell
us something about the lawgiver, viz., important people like Hammurapi
himself. For example, when the whole of the present shape of the docu-
given by a priest could have been called a "statute of the law that the Lord gave Moses" (cf. Deut
33:10). The former alternative appears more likely because the text expressly says "the
Lord gave [it] to Moses," "The omission of "to Moses" in the Samaritan Pentateuch is evidence
that at an early period there was already a tendency to read the laws of the Pentateuch as
complete.

The traditional number of laws in the Pentateuch (613) is obtained by treating both
Deut 6:4 (the "Shema") and Exod 20:2 ("I am the Lord your God") as "laws,"


"Das grosse Gesetzgebungswerk des Konigs our Representation geblieben und niemals
Rechtswirklichkeit geworden sei" (W. Eilers, Rechtsvergleichende Studien zur Gesetzgebung
Hammurapis [1917] 8, quoted in R. E Kraus, "Ein zentrales Problem des altmesopotamischen

Kraus, "Ein zentrales Problem,"

"In seiner Selbstdarstellung sind Gerechtigkeit und Klugheit die Eigenschaften, die er
sich, von den ublichen Cliches abweichend, immer wieder zuschreibt, . . . enqum, 'klug', ist
ein typisches Pradikat des Schreibers. . . nur Hammu-rabi, gleichzeitig gerechter Richter
und gelehrter Autor, hat seine Rechtsspruche aufgezeichnet und der Welt zur Verfügung
gestellt genauso, wie die Autoren der Eingeweideschaukompendien ihre Erfahrungen und
Erkenntnisse zu Nutz und Frommen der Welt in ihren Werken niederlegen. Zu Nutz und
Frommen der Welt hat auch Hammu-rabi seinen Codex verfasst und offentlich aufstellen
lassen" (Kraus, "Ein zentrales Problem," 290-91).
ment, including the important but often overlooked prologue of Hammurapi's Code, is taken into consideration, it becomes clear that a text such as Hammurapi's was not to be used to administer justice, but was rather intended to promote the image of Hammurapi as a wise and just king.\(^{21}\) What Kraus has argued for the Code of Hammurapi suits the phenomenon of law in the Pentateuch remarkably well. It explains the existence of the relatively large collections of laws strategically placed throughout the penta-teuchal narratives dealing with the life of Moses. Applying the analogy of the Code of Hammurapi helps confirm the judgment that the selection of laws in the Pentateuch is not there as a corpus of laws as such \((\textit{qua lex})\), but was intended as a description of the nature of divine wisdom and justice revealed through Moses \((\textit{qua institutio})\).

An inter-biblical example of this is found in the Book of Proverbs, with its prologue and selection of wise sayings of Solomon. The Book of Proverbs was not intended to be read as an exhaustive book of right actions but as a selective example of godly wisdom.

In the narratives of Exodus-Deuteronomy, then, we are to see not only a picture of Moses, but we are also to catch a glimpse of the nature of the law under which he lived and God's purpose for giving it. Along with the narrative portrait of Moses we see a selected sample of his laws. Returning to Knierim's thesis of the genre of the Pentateuch, what emerges from a genre analysis of the Pentateuch in its present shape is that it is a biography of Moses, albeit a modified one. It is a biography of Moses, which portrays him as a man \textit{who lived under the law} given at Sinai. It is a biography of Moses \textit{sub lege}.

A second difficulty in Knierim's assessment of the genre of the Pentateuch is the fact that although Knierim treats Genesis as an introduction to the life of Moses, there are significant problems in accounting for this section of the Pentateuch within the genre of Biography of Moses. According to Knierim, Genesis adds the dimension of "all of human history" to the biography of Moses. But it is self-evidently clear that not all of Genesis is about "all of human history." It is only the first eleven chapters of the book which have all of humanity specifically in view. Though the rest of Genesis is, in fact, drawn into the scope of "all humanity" by means of the reiterated promise that in the seed of Abraham "all the families of the land will be blessed," the narratives in chaps. 12-50 focus specifically on the family of Abraham. In fact, the three major sections of Genesis 12-50 appear to consist of genres nearly identical to that of Knierim's view of the whole

Pentateuch, namely, biographies of Abraham (chs. 12-26), Jacob (chs. 27-36) and Joseph (chs. 37-50).

Knierim rightly makes much of the fact that the whole of Genesis, covering some 2000 years, takes up only about 25 percent of the total text of the Pentateuch, whereas Exodus-Deuteronomy, which covers only the span of the life of Moses, takes up the other 75 percent. "The extent of material allotted to each of the two time spans is extremely disproportionate, a factor that must be considered programmatic." However, when the Moses-narratives (Exod 1-18 and Num 10:11-36:13) are counted alone, without the laws (Deuteronomy and the Sinai-pericope), they make up only about 20 percent of the whole of the Pentateuch. The material in Genesis devoted to the Patriarchs (Genesis 12-50) is also about 20 percent, making the narratives about Moses and those about the Patriarchs appear of equal importance within the final text.

It thus is not satisfactory to group the patriarchal narratives together with Genesis 1-11 and consider them both as the introduction to Moses' biography. It appears more probable within the framework of the whole of the Pentateuch that the patriarchal material in Genesis is intended on its own to balance off the material in the Moses narratives. The biographies of the patriarchs are set over against the biography of Moses.

The early chapters of Genesis (1-11) play their own part in providing an introduction to the whole of the Pentateuch, stressing the context of "all humanity" for both the patriarchal narratives and those of Moses. The Moses material, for its part, has been expanded with voluminous selections from the Sinai laws in order to show the reader the nature of the law under which Moses lived.

If this is an adequate description of the Pentateuch, then its genre is not simply that of a biography of Moses but rather it is a series of biographies similar perhaps to those in Kings or Samuel where the life of Saul, for example, is counterbalanced to that of David. Within this series of biographies in the Pentateuch a further textual strategy appears evident.

The chronological framework of Genesis (periodization) and the virtual freezing of time in Exodus-Deuteronomy (a single period of time only, viz., the lifespan of Moses) suggests that there has been a conscious effort to contrast the time before and leading up to the giving of the law (ante legem) with the time of Moses under the law (sub lege). Abraham lived before the giving of the law and Moses lived after it was given.

With this background to the compositional strategy of the final shape of the Pentateuch, we can now turn to its treatment of Abraham and Moses.

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23 Though it is not part of our immediate concern, one could also note indications within the final shape of the Pentateuch of a time "after the law" (post legem). Deuteronomy 30, for example, looks to a future time quite distinct from that of Moses' own day. There are close affinities between this chapter and passages in the prophetic literature which look to the time of the New Covenant, e.g., Jer 31:31ff.; Ezek 36:22ff.
Specifically, we wish to raise the question of what the Pentateuch intends to say about the lives of these two great men that contributes to our understanding of faith and keeping the Mosaic Law?

A complete answer to this question cannot be given within the scope of this paper. We will limit ourselves to two strategically important pentateuchal texts from the standpoint of its final composition, Gen 26:5 and Num 20:12. Both texts are similar in that they offer a reflective look at the lives of Abraham and Moses respectively and give an evaluation that stems from the final stages of the composition of the Pentateuch. Furthermore, both texts evaluate the lives of these two great men from the perspective of the theology of Deuteronomy. We will see that in Gen 26:5 Abraham is portrayed as one who "kept the law," whereas in Num 20:12 Moses is portrayed as one who "did not believe."

II. Abraham and the Mosaic Law (Gen 26:5)

In Gen 26:5, God says, "Abraham obeyed my voice יְקלַב . . . and kept my charge יָשָׁם מְצָהוֹת, my commandments מְצָהוֹת, my statutes מְצוּקות, and my laws מְצוּקות." Though on the face of it, the meaning of this verse is clear enough, it raises questions when viewed within the larger context of the book. How was it possible for Abraham to obey the commandments, statutes, and laws before they were given? Why is Abraham here credited with keeping the law when in the previous narratives great pains were taken to show him as one who lived by faith (e.g., Gen 15:6)? There has been no mention of Abraham's having the law or keeping the law previous to this passage. Why, now suddenly, does the text say Abraham had kept the law?

The verse is recognized as "deuteronomistic" by most biblical scholars, both critical and conservative. Earlier biblical scholars went to great lengths to explain the verse in view of its inherent historical and theological difficulties. For those who saw the verse as a description of Abraham's legal


25 F. Delitzsch says of the verse, for example, "Undoubtedly verse 5 in this passage is from the hand of the Deuteronomist" (A New Commentary on Genesis [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1888] 137ff.). C. F. Keil also recognized that these same terms were later used to describe the Mosaic Law: "The piety of Abraham is described in words that indicate a perfect obedience to all the commands of God and therefore frequently recur among the legal expressions of a later date [in der spateren Gesetzessprache]" (Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971] 270). Cf. Benno Jacob, "Aber diese Ausdrucke besagen, dass er auf den verschiedensten Gebieten sein Leben ahnlich den spateren Ordnungen des Gesetzes nach den speziellen Weisungen Gottes, wie sie ihm erteilt wurden oder er sie sich selbst erschlossen mochte, eingerichtet hat" (Das erste Buck der Tora Genesis [Berlin: Schocken, 1934] 548). Since, throughout the Pentateuch and especially in Deuteronomy, these terms denote the Mosaic Law (e.g., Deut 11:1; 26:17) this passage says, in no uncertain terms, that Abraham kept the Mosaic Law.
adherence to the law, the major problem was how Abraham could have had access to the Mosaic Law. Early rabbinical approaches, for example, attempted by word associations to identify each of the terms used here with a specific act of obedience of Abraham within the patriarchal narratives. In that way it could be demonstrated that Abraham knew the Mosaic Law and thus kept it. This approach, however, did not gain wide acceptance because, apart from a remote link to circumcision, none of the terms in Gen 26:5 could be associated with events or actions of Abraham within the biblical narratives.

Another, and more common, rabbinical explanation of 26:5 made use of the Talmudic teaching of the "Noahic laws." This approach was also accepted among the early Protestant scholars. Thus the deuteronomistic terms for the law in Gen 26:5 were identified by some as those general laws given to all men since the time of Noah. However, because these specific terms are, in fact, used later in the Pentateuch to represent the whole of the Mosaic Law, it proved difficult to limit them only to the concept of the Noahic laws. Thus for this particular passage (Gen 26:5) the Talmud itself rejected the notion of Noahic laws and took the position that, in his own lifetime, Abraham was given the whole of the Mosaic Law.

The terms מָצָאָהּ and מַשָּׁרְמָה, for example, were related to Abraham's obedience in circumcision since, according to Gen 17:9, Abraham was to "keep" (תָּשַׁל) God's covenant in circumcision and 21:4 records that Abraham circumcised Isaac "as God had commanded [וַיָּצָא] him."

The terms תַּחַת and תַּחַם, for example, could not otherwise be associated with Abraham's piety in the patriarchal narratives and no amount of midrashic attempts to do so proved successful. Another, but similar, attempt to demonstrate that Abraham had the law of Moses is that of Walter Kaiser: "In spite of its marvelous succinctness, economy of words, and comprehensive vision, it must not be thought that the Decalogue was inaugurated and promulgated at Sinai for the first time. All Ten Commandments had been part of the law of God previously written on hearts instead of stone, for all ten appear, in one way or another, in Gen. They are: The first, Gen 35:2: 'Get rid of the forbidden gods.' The second, Gen 31:39: Laban to Jacob: 'But why did you steal my gods?' The third, Gen 24:3: 'I want you to swear by the Lord' " (Toward Old Testament Ethics [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983] 81-82).

The Talmud teaches that all descendants of Noah who did not follow the practices of idolatry were given seven divine laws. See Der babylonische Talmud (ed. L. Godschmidt; Berlin: Judischer Verlag, 1930) 2.373.


Yoma 28b (Die babylonische Talmud 3.75). See Str-B 3.204-5 for further examples. Jacob suggested that this Talmudic interpretation was an attempt to counter the argument of Paul in Gal 3: 17ff. ("polemisch gegen Paulus," Das erste Buch, 549). Andreas Rivetus specifically rejects this view as "false" (Opera theologica [Rotterdam, 1651] 1.457). According to the Kabbalah the laws mentioned in this verse are those of the Decalogue because the verse contains...
As to how Abraham would have known the law, the assumption was that God had revealed it to him. It was also held by many that Abraham derived the laws of Moses from his own observations, or even from written tradition, which could be traced back to Enoch. In *Jub.* 21:10, for example, when explaining the various laws for sacrifice, Abraham says, "for thus I have found it written in the books of my forefathers, and in the words of Enoch, and in the words of Noah." The tractate *Nedarim* 32a states that Abraham was three years old when he first began to obey the law. By means of gematria, the rule that permits deriving significance from the numerical value of the consonants of a word, the first word, ובש, is read as the number 172 (years). Thus 26:5 was read as if it said "For 172 [בוש] years Abraham obeyed me." Since Abraham lived for 175 years, it would have been at the age of three years that he first began to obey God's law.

It is difficult to see in these early rabbinical attempts a convincing explanation of the Genesis passage. They are rather attempts at harmonization. If, in fact, to keep the "commandments, statutes and laws" meant to keep the Mosaic Law as the rabbis had understood these terms in Deuteronomy, then what other explanation remained? Abraham must have known the Mosaic Law.

As is always the case in the reading of a text, their understanding of the sense of the whole determined their interpretation of this part. What was clearly not open to these commentators was the possibility that this verse was intended as an interpretation of the life of Abraham from another perspective than that of the law.

10 words and the Decalogue has 172 words, the same number as the Hebrew word ובש in Gen 26:5. See Baal Hatturim, *Chumash* (New York: Philipp Feldheim, 1967) 81.

32 "God disclosed to him the new teachings which He expounded daily in the heavenly academy" (Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of The Jews* [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1968] 1.292). Rivetus held that "praeter naturae legem, habuisse patres multas observationes, praeurnim circa divinum cultum ex speciali Dei revelatione, et majorum qui ea accepserat imitatione, ut de mundis animalibus offerendis et talia, praeter circumcisionem, et alios mandatos ritus" (*Opera theologica* 1.457). According to rabbinic teaching God himself was guided by the Torah in creating the world, but he hid the Torah from mankind until the time of Abraham: "שבת נברא העולם זון והב מיום אברם עד שבtrer עד שנטדר אברם שנדמע עבש" (*Yalkut Shemoni* [Jerusalem, 1960] 972).

33 Str-B 3.205.

34 Ibid., 205-6.

35 *APOST* 2.44.

36 The number 172 is derived from י = 70; ב = 100; and ש = 2. See Wilhelm Bacher, *Die exegetische Temzinologie der judischen Taditionsliteratur* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1965) 127.

37 *Midrash Rabbah* (New York: KTAV, n.d.) 135. The purpose of this explanation was apparently to deal with the problem of idolatry in Terah's household (Josh 24:2.). If Abraham had received the Mosaic Law already at age three, he could not have been influenced by his father's idolatry.

38 Although Calvin is not clear in his comments on this passage, he appears to follow the same line of interpretation as that reflected in the rabbis. He writes, “And although laws, statutes, rites, precepts and ceremonies, had not yet been written [nondum erant scriptae], Moses used these terms, that he might the more clearly show how sedulously Abraham reg-
The view of the later medieval Jewish commentaries, on the other hand, was that these 'laws' were merely a form of general revelation of moral and ethical precepts. A similar interpretation is found in many Christian commentaries. The difficulty with such an interpretation is not merely the fact that elsewhere in the Pentateuch each of these terms is used specifically

ulated his life according to the will of God alone--how carefully he abstained from all the impurities of the heathen" (Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis [trans. John King; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979] 60). Henry Ainsworth also appears to follow this line of interpretation, "... under these three particulars, the whole charge or custody forespoken of, is comprehended; as afterward by Moses God gave the ten Commandements, or morall precepts, Exod 20. Judgements, or judicial lawes for punishing transgressors, Exod. 21, &c. and statutes, or rules, ordinances and decrees for the service of God, Lev. 3.17. and 6.18.22. Exod. 12.24. & 27.31. & 29.9. & 30.21. All which Abraham observed, and is commended of God therefore" (Annotations upon the Five Bookes of Moses, The Booke of the Psalmes, and the Song of Songs, or Canticles [London: M. Parsons, 1639] 99).

39 Jacob, Das erste Buck, 549. Rashi, for example, says, "my commandments' are those things which even if they had not been written [in the Law] it is evident [Nyvxr] that they are commanded [tvvFchl], such as stealing and murder" (Torat Chaim Chumask, 13). Regarding the last two terms, however, "my statutes" and "my laws," Rashi held that they were unobtainable by reason alone but were given as a command from God.

40 The Belgic Confession (1561), for example, takes the Tvrvt here to be the moral law (praecepta), the tvcm as doctrine (leges) necessary to be believed, and the Tvmw as political law (judicia). Thomas Cartwright (1535-1603) follows Nicholas of Lyra (1270-1340), who follows Rashi, "Lyra ait, ea esse, quae sunt de dictamine rationis rectae et servanda etiamsi nulla lex esset posita" (Critici sacri, 632). Lyra, however, did not follow Rashi on the last two terms, much to Cartwright's surprise, "... a quo mirum est Lyram dissentire." Lyra understood these terms as follows: "Tvrvt cerimonias, seu statuta, ea esse, quae pertinent ad modum colendi Dei; Tvrvt leges esse ista, quae non obligant, nisi quia sunt a Deo, vel homine instituta, vel praecepta" (ibid.). Ultimately the dependency on Rashi and innovations (see previous note) go back to Lyra, "cerimonias meas, seu statuta mea, et leges meas," and the Vulgate, "praecepta et mandata mea et caerimonias legesque." Johannes Drusius (1550-1616) defined these terms thus: "[Tvmw] quaecunque mandavi ut custodiret ... [Tywc] praecepta moralia quae post decalogo comprehensa sunt ... [Tvrvt] forenes, sive quae ad judicia pertinent" (Critici sacri, 622). Johannes Mercerus distinguishes sharply between each of the five terms: (1) the first term refers generally to Abraham's obedience in such cases as the command to leave Ur of the Chaldeans and the binding of Isaac; (2) the second term refers to general religious practice which Abraham carried out diligently as God had prescribed; (3) the third term refers to general moral principles, such as the Decalogue, and are posited in the natural mind; (4) the fourth term refers to rituals by which God is worshiped as well as statutes whose rationale is not immediately obvious, such as the red heifer; and (5) the fifth term refers to documents by which one is instructed in doctrine. "Sic Dei voluntatem partitur Moses hoc loco, ut postea in Lege tradenda divisa est [but the Jewish view that Abraham had the whole of the Mosaic Law is to be rejected]. . . . Non est quidem dubium quin ante Legem multa seruarent, quae postea in Legem sunt redacta, ut de mundis animalibus immolandis, aut edendis, et alia. Sed non sunt minutiis astringendi. . . . Sed nondum haec in legem certam abierat, ut postea sub Mose, ubi sacerdotium certa familia, et certis ritibus est institutum, etc. . . . Cum ergo hic Moses in Abrahano, hac legis in suas partes distributione utitur, significat eum absolutissime Dei voluntati paruisse, et per omnia morigerum fuisset, ut nihil omiserit corum quae tunc praecriptorat Dominus agenda aut seruanda" (In Genesin Primum Mosis Librum, sic a Graecis Appellatum, Commentarius [Genevae, 1598] 458).
to describe an aspect of the Mosaic Law, but, more importantly, elsewhere in the Pentateuch the same list of terms denotes the whole of the Mosaic Law.\footnote{E.g., Deut 11:1.} Thus there seems little room for doubt that this passage is referring to the Mosaic Law.

Literary critics, on the other hand, are virtually unanimous in assigning the verses to a "deuteronomic redaction."\footnote{H. Holzinger, \textit{Einleitung in den Hexateuch} (Freiburg: J. C. B. ;Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1893) 3, Tabellen über die Quellenscheidung; Otto Procksch, \textit{Die Genesis übersetzt und erklärt} (Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1913) 151.} Gunkel assigned it to a later (more legalistic) period, though he agreed that the terms are deuteronomisch.\footnote{"The thought that Abraham had fulfilled so many commandments does not suit the spirit of the ancient narratives [\textit{Sage}], but betrays that of a later (legalistic) piety" (Hermann Gunkel, \textit{Genesis} [Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977] 300).} Westemann associated the verse with the "post-deuteronomic" interpretation of Israel's relationship to God in terms of obedience to the law (\textit{Gesetzesgehorsam}).\footnote{Claus Westermann, \textit{Genesis} (BKAT 2; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981) 518.}

Though such responses are predictable of critical methodology, they serve better as illustrations of the nature of the problem than they do its solution. What critical scholarship is unanimous in affirming is that at some point in the composition of the Pentateuch, this statement about Abraham's piety was inserted to show that he kept the Mosaic Law. Critical scholarship has also affirmed that the verse stems from the same process of composition that resulted in the addition of Deuteronomy to the Pentateuch.\footnote{On the "deuteronomic redaction of the Pentateuch," see Rolf Rendtorff, \textit{Das überlieferungs-geschichtliche Problem}, 164; Erhard Blum, \textit{Die Komposition der Vatergeschichte}, 362ff.; C. Brekhans, "Die sogenannten deuteronomischen Elemente in Gen.-Num. Ein Beitrag zur Vorgeschichte des Deuteronomiums," in \textit{Volume du Congres. Geneve 1965} (VTSupp 15; Leiden: Brill, 1966) 90-96.}

Ultimately, we should attempt to find the meaning of this verse in the larger strategy and purpose of the Pentateuch.\footnote{Such an approach follows from the observation that, on most reckonings, the verse belongs to the work of the author in shaping the final form of the Pentateuch.} Did the author of the Pentateuch intend to depict Abraham as a model of faith or as a model of obedience to the law? Curiously enough, the overwhelming majority of biblical scholars have read this passage as if the verse intended to show Abraham's life as an example of obedience to the law (\textit{Gesetzesgehorsam}).

However, several considerations make this assumption unlikely. The first is the fact that the final shape of the Abrahamic narratives is closely aligned with the faith theme that forms the larger structure of the Pentateuch. This same faith theme is also part and parcel with the "deuteronomic composition" of Gen 26:5. That being the case, it is unlikely that the same author would want to stress "faith" at the expense of law at one point in the composition of the Pentateuch and law at the expense of "faith" at another.
The chronological setting of the patriarchal narratives offers further evidence that this text (Gen 26:5) intends to teach Abraham's faith and not his obedience to the law as such. It is well known that the early chapters of the Pentateuch are governed by an all-embracing chronological scheme. This scheme runs throughout the patriarchal narratives up to the time of the giving of the law at Sinai. At that point, the linear chronology broadens out into a literary present. Thus the events of the Pentateuch are divided between those events before and those events during the giving of the law. Within this scheme, then, the patriarchs are necessarily portrayed as those who lived before the law (ante legem). They are chronologically separated from those who lived under the law (sub lege). Thus any statement about Abraham would likely be intended as a contrast to life under the law. Furthermore, the very existence of such a wide range of "explanations" of Abraham's "living under the law" (sub lege), so common in rabbinical and Christian exegesis, testifies to the difficulties of reading Gen 26:5 as a statement about Abraham's obedience to the Mosaic Law.

It appears reasonable to conclude, therefore, that the importance of Gen 26:5 lies in what it tells us about the meaning of the deuteronomic terms it uses. It is as if the author of the Pentateuch has seized on the Abrahamic narratives as a way to explain his concept of "keeping the law." The author uses the life of Abraham, not Moses, to illustrate that one can fulfill the righteous requirement of the law. In choosing Abraham and not Moses, the author shows that 'keeping the law" means "believing in God," just as Abraham believed God and was counted righteous (Gen 15:6). In effect the author of the Pentateuch says, "Be like Abraham. Live a life of faith and it can be said that you are keeping the law."

We turn now to a consideration of the Pentateuch's portrayal of Moses. We will not attempt a survey of the whole of the life of Moses, but rather, we will look only at the assessment of Moses that lies within the compositional seams.

III. Moses and the Faith of Abraham (Num 20:1-13)

According to Schmitt, Numbers 20 contains an original account of the rebellion of Moses and Aaron that has been secondarily reworked into the


48 Moreover, the "Glaubens-Thematik," which is central to the Abrahamic narratives, is also related to the assessment of the life of Moses. The Pentateuch tells us that at the end of his life, Moses died in the wilderness, not entering into the good land, because he "did not believe" God (Num 20:12). At that point the author of the Pentateuch labeled the action of Moses as "faithlessness." Within such a scheme it would follow that the Pentateuch would also view Abraham's "faith" as obedience to the law.
faith theme. He argues that the narrative of Num 20:1-13 was originally a self-contained unit which, apart from v. 12, formed a coherent whole. Verse 12, however, intrudes into this original narrative and gives it a specific theological interpretation ("Glaubens-Thematic"). The original theme of the passage was the rebellion of the people. This theme, however, was replaced in v. 12 by a focus on faith—an idea that had not hitherto played a part in the narrative. As chapter 20 opens, the Israelites were encamped at Kadesh (20:1) but had begun to contend (בר) with Moses on account of the lack of food and water. When the Lord told Moses to take a rod and speak to the rock to bring forth water, he did “as [the Lord] commanded him” (20:9). This statement gives an initial impression that Moses and Aaron were obediently following the Lord's commands. At least so far. Then Moses, saying to Israel, "You rebellious ones" (מל, 20:10), struck the rock twice and water came out for both the people and their animals (20:11).

Though in popular exposition the nature of Moses' sin is emphasized, it is not, in fact, immediately clear from the text why the Lord says Moses (and Aaron) "did not believe" (20:12). Only the bare outline of the events are retained in the narrative. Nevertheless attempts to find the error of Moses and Aaron and relate it to their lack of faith are numerous. Moses' sin has generally been related to three aspects of the narrative, (1) his striking the rock with the rod (20:11), (2) his (harsh) words to the people (20:10), and (3) the lacunae within the narrative itself.

(1) There are those who argue that Moses' lack of faith is exhibited in his striking the rock rather than merely speaking to it. However, as the narrative presents it, the Lord certainly intended Moses to use the rod in some way since it was the Lord who told Moses to get the rod and, according to

49 In Deut 1:37; 3:26; and 4:21, Moses says he could not enter the land because of the rebellion of the people--an idea consistent with Num 20:10-11, 13. The presence of the theme of rebellion underlying the present text is betrayed by several wordplays throughout the narrative between the people's rebellion (e.g., בר, בל, וַרִבְר, וַרָּם) and the place name Meribah (מריב). Also, the fact that later allusions to the Meribah incident (Num 20:24; 27:14; Deut 32:51) speak of the people's rebellion there and not the "unfaithfulness of Moses and Aaron," further supports Schmitt's argument that originally that was the central theme of the story. See below.

50 The difficulty of determining the nature of Moses' sin because of the brevity of the narrative was already acknowledged by early biblical scholars. Regarding this problem Munster said, "Et quidem verba Mose sunt tam succincta ut nemo facile ex illis advertere possit in quo peccaverit" (Critici sacri 2.323).

51 At the conclusion of the story the place of the waters is called Meribah (מריב), which is linked by means of a wordplay to the Israelite's rebellion (בר) in 20:3. The last statement, 20: 13b, "and he was sanctified [שָׂרֵד] among them," links the narrative to the location of the people at the beginning of the story, Kadesh (קדש), and to the next section (20:14) where the location is again Kadesh.

52 Drusius, "De peccato Mosis variae sunt interpretum opiniones, quas omnes recensere longum esset" (Critici sacri 2.328).
the narrative, Moses is commended for doing "as he commanded" (20:9). The narrative, however, does not recount the Lord's instructions concerning how or why Moses was to use the rod. Keil, like many, thus supposed that the Lord's instructions to "speak to the rock" meant that Moses was merely to hold the rod in his hand while he spoke to the rock.53 In this way it is inferred from the narrative that Moses erred in striking the rock.54 That such a meaning is not likely a part of the author's intention is clear from other narratives where Moses was explicitly commanded to strike ( ApplicationDbContext 17:6, for example, the Lord told Moses, "I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike [the rock, and water shall come out of it, that the people may drink." Moreover this explanation has frequently met with the additional argument that if God told them to take the rod, what else would have been expected but to use it to strike the stone?55 In response, some have argued that the rod was the budding rod of Aaron and hence should not have been used for striking.56 This, for example, was the position of Jamieson who argued that the error of Moses consisted of his striking the rock "twice in his impetuosity, thus endangering the blossoms of the rod."57 Some have laid stress merely on the fact that Moses struck the rock twice.58

(2) Another line of explanation of Moses' faithlessness in Num 20:7-13 focuses on what he said when he struck the rock. The Septuagint translators apparently attempted to resolve the problem by translating Moses' words

53 Keil, Biblical Commentary 3.130.
54 This, for example, is the interpretation of the passage given by Rashi. Rashi states, "God did not command him to strike the rock but to speak to it."
55 "Quorum virga sumenda erat, nisi ut percuterent (T. Malvenda, Commentaria in sacram Scripturam una cum nova de verbo ad verbum ex hebraeo translatione, variisque lectionibus, 1650, quoted in M. Pol, Synopsis criticorum [Utrecht: Leusden, 1684] 1.689).
56 Franziscus Junius, 1587, quoted in Pol, Synopsis 1.689, "At florida illa virga Aaronis non erat ad percutiendum vel imperata, vel commoda." Also Johannes Drusius (1550-1616), "Sed si verba educenda erat aqua, cur jussus est accipere virgam? Nam ea nihil opus, si sermone res transigi debebat" (Critici sacri 2.328).
57 Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, A Commentary Critical, Experimental and Practical on the Old and New Testaments (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1945) 564. 58 Also Ainsworth, "the doubling of his stroke shewed also the heat of his anger" (Annotations, 127). Jamieson writes, "Hence some writers consider that his hasty smiting of the rock twice was an act of distrust-that such a rebellious rabble would be relieved by a miracle; and that as the water did not gush out immediately, his distrust rose into unbelief, a confirmed persuasion that they would get none" (Commentary, 564). Keil turns Moses' striking the rock into an evidence of lack of faith by suggesting that striking the rock was an exercise of human works rather than trust in God: 'He then struck the rock twice with the rod, 'as if it depended upon human exertion, and not upon the power of God alone,' or as if the promise of God 'would not have been fulfilled without all the smiting on his part' " (Biblical Commentary, 131). Rashi suggested that the first time Moses struck the rock only a few drops (NypF) came out because God had told him to speak to it.
to the people (v. 10) by "Hear me, you faithless ones [οἱ ἁπιστοὶ]." This was a convenient solution to the passage in Greek because it took advantage of the semantic range of the Greek word ἁπιστοὶ, used elsewhere in the Pentateuch to render the Hebrew word "to rebel" (חָרָם). The Greek ἁπιστοὶ can mean either "disobedient" or "unbelieving." For some the sin of Moses consisted simply of his speaking to the people rather than to the rock. Some have argued that the source of Moses' error lay rather in the harsh words he spoke to the people. Rather than speaking to the rock, as the Lord had commanded, Moses spoke harshly to the people. Some have read the Hebrew מָרְו (Num 20:10) as the Greek word μωροὶ, and thus said Moses sinned in calling God's people fools. According to Jamieson, "his speech conveyed the impression that it was by some power or virtue inherent in him or in the rod that the miracle was wrought." Jamieson is apparently dependent on Sebastian Castellio (1515-1563) who understood the sin of Moses and Aaron to consist of their saying "shall we draw water?" Such words, according to Castellio, showed that they were taking credit for doing that which only God could do. Others have argued that when Moses struck the rock the first time no water came out and at that point the people began to murmur and doubt that God would give them water. Thus Moses called the people "you rebellious ones" and struck the rock a second time. Several early biblical scholars have read the interrogative in هل ת채ל in the sense of "whether" (num) and hence rendered Moses' words as "Are we really able to bring water out for you?"

59 The Vulgate follows the Septuagint with the conflated rebelles et increduli.
61 LSJ 182. It is also possible that an attempt has been made to associate the word מָרְו with מָרְו or מָרְו, which was translated with ἁπιστοὶ in Deut 21:18. It may also be an unintended variant in the Vorlage of the Septuagint, but that is less likely in this case. The history of the difficulty in interpretation in this passage argues against an unintended variant.
62 Paul Fagius, Critici sacri 2.324. According to Fagius, this was a view known inter Hebraeos.
63 "Instead of speaking to the rock with the rod of God in his hand, as God directed him, he spoke to the congregation, and in these inconsiderate words, . . . which, if they did not express any doubt in the help of the Lord, were certainly fitted to strengthen the people in their unbelief, and are therefore described in Ps. cvi.33 as prating (speaking unadvisedly) with the lips" (Keil, Biblical Commentary, 130-31).
64 Matching the Hebrew consonants מ"", to their Greek equivalents, מ = μ, ו = χ, и = ι, with the nominative ending οι.
65 Critici sacri 2.323.
66 Jamieson, Commentary, 564.
67 "In eo peccatum est quod dixerunt, Eliciamus, quod Dei erat, sibi tribuentes" (Critici sacri 2.326).
68 See Drusius, Critici sacri 2.328. Drusius was probably referring to Rashi when he attributed this view to the antiquissimi Ebraei.
70 Following the Vulgate.
In so doing, they are able to show Moses' words to be an expression of doubt. An equally ingenious solution noted by Drusius, though hardly possible, was that the verb מָדַר (מָדַר) in v. 8, "you shall speak [to the rock]," was to be derived from the noun מָדַר, "pestilence, plague," and hence should be translated 'you shall destroy [the rock]."71

(3) Finally, the sparsity of the narrative itself, that is the lacunae, has provided the occasion for various explanations of Moses' error. Jamieson, for example, suggested that there were perhaps circumstances "unrecorded which led to so severe a chastisement as exclusion from the promised land."72 Munster suggested that the people wanted to receive water from one particular rock and Moses wanted to give them water from a different rock, saying, "We are not able to give water from that rock are we?" Thus, Munster argued, Moses caused the people to think that God could give them water from some rocks but not others.73 Lightfoot argued that the miracle of the water from the rock, having been given already at the beginning of the wilderness wanderings, implied to Moses that a still longer time of waiting in the desert was to follow. The sin of Moses, then, lay in "discrediting God's promise to lead the people into Canaan."74

Another major element of uncertainty in the story is the nature of the sin of Aaron. Because the story itself is silent about the actions of Aaron, the common, but implausible, explanation is that he sinned in remaining silent and not correcting Moses.75

These many and varied attempts at explaining v. 12 illustrate that which is already obvious from the text itself, that is, the passage does not explicitly tell us the nature of Moses' (or Aaron's) lack of faith.76 Judging from the passage alone, the faithlessness of Moses does not appear to have consisted in his striking the rock or in his harsh words but rather lies just out of reach somewhere in the numerous "gaps"77 of the story. We should stress that this

71 Critici sacri 2.328. Drusius rejected the view because the verb did not have a direct object with מָדַר but rather an object with לַדַּר.
72 Jamieson, Commentary, 565.
73 Critici sacri 2.323.
74 See Jamieson, Commentary, 565.
75 Pol, Synopsis 1.689.
76 Gray's comment has merit, "The sin which excluded Moses and Aaron from Canaan is described in v.12 as unbelief, in v.24 [and] 2714 as rebellion. But in v.8-11, as they now stand, neither unbelief nor rebellion on the part of Moses and Aaron is recorded; either the one or the other has often been read into the verses, but neither is there" (George Buchanan Gray, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Numbers [ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1903] 261).
77 "From the viewpoint of what is directly given in the language, the literary work consists of bits and fragments to be linked and pieced together in the process of reading: it establishes a system of gaps that must be filled in. This gap-filling ranges from simple linkages of elements, which the reader performs automatically, to intricate networks that are figured out consciously, laboriously, hesitantly, and with constant modifications in the light of additional information disclosed in later stages of the reading" (Meir Sternberg, The Poetics of Biblical Narrative [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985] 186).
THE MOSAIC LAW is not a result of a deficiency in the story. It rather appears to be part of the story's design. It is just at the point of recounting the nature of their sin that the author abbreviates the narrative and moves on to the divine speech (Num 20:12). Moreover, it is just this divine speech that "fills the gap" with the word about faith, giving the story a sense far larger than that of its own immediate concerns. Thus Schmitt concludes, the reason the exact nature of the error of Moses is not immediately clear from the passage is because the author has deliberately suppressed it in order to stress the divine pronouncement of Moses' lack of faith. Though we may not want to follow Schmitt's line of

78 Critical scholarship shows little patience with the story as it now stands. "The truth is, the story is mutilated" (Gray, Numbers, 262). The classic critical study of Num 20:1-13 is that of Hugo Gressmann in Mose und seine Zeit. Ein Kommentar zu den Mose-Sagen (Gottingen: Van denhoeck & Ruprecht, 1913) 150-54. Gressmann divided the account into two separate stories. One, the Elohist, is an "Ortsage" explaining the abundant oasis at Kadesh. The other, the later Priesterkodex, is only partially preserved and attempts to explain why Moses and Aaron did not go into the land. Cornill treated Num 20:1-13 as an original unity but saw it largely "mutilated" (verstummelt) by a later redactor (see H. Holzinger, Einleitung in den Hexateuch [Freiburg: J. C. B. Mohr, 1893] app. 1, Quellenscheidung von Genesis bis Josua, 9).

79 The importance of the divine word about Moses' lack of faith in Num 20:12 can be seen all the more in the fact that it abruptly breaks into a narrative that appears to be primarily concerned with Israel's rebellion: "The centrality of the idea of rebellion in the narrative can be seen "in the fact that at the close of the chapter (20:24), when the death of Aaron is recounted, there is a back-reference to the earlier failure of Moses and Aaron. Surprisingly, according to the narrative of 20:24, it was not their lack of faith that disqualified them from entering into the land, as in 20:12, but rather their rebellion (createTime). Furthermore, the reference to their rebellion (createTime) in 20:24 provides the basis for a wordplay on the name of the waters, "Waters of Meribah" (meribah). Then again, later in the book, as the death of Moses approached and he was reminded that he could not enter the land with the people (Num 27:14), there is another back-reference to Num 20:1-13. It is recalled that Moses could not enter the land because, the Lord said, "You rebelled [createTime] to sanctify me [holyday] . . . at the waters of Meribah [meribah]." Similarly, in Deut 32:51 the Lord states that Moses (and Aaron) "acted treacherously [malach] with me not sanctifying me [holyday] in the midst of the Israelites at the waters of Meribah [meribah]." In each case the Numbers 20 passage is read without reference to the lack of faith of Moses and Aaron (20:12). Mention should also be made here of the reading in Psalm 95 which also does not make reference to their "lack of faith" at Meribah. This, however, is probably due to the fact that the primary text for Psalm 95 was the similar passage in Exodus 17 rather than Numbers 20. When the allusions to the Meribah passage in Numbers 20 are compared with the text in its present state, one can see quite easily, Schmitt argues, that the terms for rebellion (e.g., creativity, Deut 32:51) have been interpreted by the term "faith" (faith) in Num 20:12. Since, according to Schmitt, the theme of faith forms the motif of the completed version of the Pentateuch, the account of the rebellion of Moses and Aaron at the waters of Meribah has become an example of the theme of faith found throughout the Pentateuch. A similar type of interpretation can be seen in the reading of Psalm 95 in Heb 3:7-18. After an extensive quotation of the psalm, which does not make reference to the faithlessness of Moses, the writer of Hebrews proceeds to interpret the psalm in light of the theme of faith. The crucial statement in Psalm 95 is v. 10, "They always go astray in their hearts" (hearts). It is just this statement that the writer of Hebrews then interprets as, "Take care, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving [aapistia] heart, leading you to fall away from the living God."
argument fully,80 we believe his analysis points the way to the central message of the narrative. The rebellion of Moses and Aaron (מְרַדְּתָם, 20:24), which appears at some point to have been an important feature of the narrative, has been replaced with the focus on their faithlessness (לא האמנים, 20:12). Such an interpretation has raised the actions of Moses and Aaron in the narrative to a higher level of theological reflection--the issue of faith versus obedience to the law.81 Their actions epitomize the negative side of the message of faith. Moses and Aaron, who held high positions under the law, did not enjoy God's gift of the land. They died in the wilderness because they did not believe.82

IV. Conclusion

The narrative strategy of the Pentateuch contrasts Abraham, who kept the law, and Moses, whose faith was weakened under the law. This suggests a conscious effort on the part of the author of the Pentateuch to distinguish between a life of faith before the law (ante legem) and a lack of faith under the law (sub lege). This is accomplished by showing that the life of God's people before the giving of the law was characterized by faith and trust in God, but after the giving of the law their lives were characterized by faithlessness and failure. Abraham lived by faith (Gen 15:6), in Egypt the Israelites lived by faith (Exod 4), they came out of Egypt by faith (Exod 14:31) and they approached Mount Sinai by faith (Exod 19:9). However, after the giving of the law, no longer was the life of God's people marked by faith.83 Even their leaders, Moses and Aaron, failed to believe in God after the coming of the law.

80 We need not, however, work from Schmitt's premise regarding the priestly material or draw the same conclusion regarding the time of this redaction. Verse 12, in fact, is linked to the rest of the narrative by means of the repetition of the notion of “sanctifying God,” לא הקדש שנין (20:12) and ותִּדְרָע (20:13). Cf. D. A. Carson, "Redaction Criticism: On the Legitimacy and Illegitimacy of a Literary Tool," in Scripture and Truth (ed. D. A. Carson and J. D. Woodbridge; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983) 119-42.

81 Schmitt has argued that this "Glaubens-Thematik" can be traced to the influence of Deuteronomy. Given the fact that in Deuteronomy it is Moses who is the speaker, Schmitt's "Glaubens-Thematik" is, narratively at least, Mosaic in origin. In Deut 9:23, for example, Moses tells the Israelites, "And when the LORD sent you from Kadesh-barnea, . . . you rebelled [וַיְדַרְּע] against the commandment of the LORD your God and did not believe [לא אֲמַרְתֶּם] him or obey [שָׁמַחְתֶּם] his voice." The view which Moses expresses here in Deuteronomy is precisely that of the Glaubens-Thematik.

82 An identical interpretation can be found in Num 14:11, where the Lord says of the rebellion (מִרדָד מָדִים, v. 9) of the people, "how long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe [לא אמר עני] me?"

83 This strategy of the author of the Pentateuch can be seen clearly in the vocabulary of faith (אמנים) which he employs in the Pentateuch. For example, throughout the Pentateuch, each use of the word "faith" as part of the "Glaubens-Thematik" before the giving of the law at Sinai is positive: Abraham believed, Israel believed and so on. After the giving of the law,
If we have accurately described this aspect of the compositional strategy of the Pentateuch, then we have uncovered an initial and clear indication of the Pentateuch's view of the Mosaic Law. The view is, in fact, remarkably similar to that of Jer 31:31ff. Just as Jeremiah looked back at the failure of the Sinai covenant and the Mosaic Law which the Israelites had failed to keep, so the author of the Pentateuch already held little hope for blessing *sub lege*. Jeremiah looked forward to a time when the Torah would be internalized, not written on tablets of stone (cf. Ezek 36:26) but written on their heart (Jer 31:33). In the same way the Pentateuch holds up the example of Abraham, a model of faith, one who did not have the tablets of stone but who nevertheless kept the law by living a life of faith. At the same time it offers the warning of the life of Moses, who died in the wilderness because of his lack of faith. In this respect it seems fair to conclude that the view of the Mosaic Law found in the Pentateuch is essentially that of the New Covenant passages in the prophets.\(^{84}\)

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however, the positive statements of faith disappear. The statements about Israel's faith are all negative, that is, after Sinai, Israel (Num 14:11) and Moses and Aaron (Num 20:12) "did not believe." Thus, standing between the narratives that stress the faith of God's people and those that stress their faithlessness is the account of the giving of the law at Sinai. The last positive statement of faith in the Pentateuch is Exod 19:9a, the prelude to the giving of the law. It is significant that in Heb 11:29, as the writer rehearses the examples of faith in the Pentateuch, he ends his examples from the Pentateuch with the crossing of the Red Sea and moves immediately to the Book of Joshua. He is clearly following here the line of argument of the "Glaubens-Thematik" in the Pentateuch.

\(^{84}\) This view of the nature of the Pentateuch and its view of the law is similar to that of Walther Eichrodt who argued that in the Pentateuch the law is presented in such a way that it is "impressed on the heart and conscience. Application to individual concrete instances is then left in many cases to a healthy feeling for justice" (*Theology of the Old Testament* [2 vols.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961] 1.77).

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The Fall of a Great Leader
as Illustrated in the Life of Moses

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One distinctive feature that sets the Bible apart from other historical writings is its relentless willingness to mention the transgressions of its heroes. Even Moses, who without a doubt, is regarded as the greatest and most dynamic of the OT prophets and leaders, does not have his failures omitted. He was one who was tremendously used of God and yet one who fell into sin. Lessons can be learned from the sin of Moses for the benefit of God's leaders today. Such lessons will aid the leader when pressures mount; will guard against the hideous sin of unbelief; will reveal the increased demands that come with the title "leader;" and will warn against the high cost of disobedience paid by God's leaders who sin.

The Pressure of Difficulties on Leadership

In Difficulty People-Pressure is Inevitable

In Numbers 20:1-5, Moses the leader faces the pressure that comes when difficulty arrives. After 37 years had passed, the stage seems set for history to repeat itself, when the second generation appears no different from the first in their complaint about a lack of water at Kadesh. Why did God allow the situation regarding the lack of water to occur in the first place? What was His purpose?
First, the second generation was to be put to the test in order to find out whether it was better than the first; second, Yahweh's greatness and might were to be impressed upon them by His ability and readiness to help them in their hour of need in order to prove Himself as the God of their covenant. By purposely creating a situation in which the people lacked water (a most precious commodity in the desert), Yahweh causes the second generation to realize their dependence upon Him, as well as His readiness to help them as He had done to their fathers.1

Difficult times tend to come all at once. This appears to have been the case with Moses. At Kadesh, Moses experienced pressure from all angles. In verse one, Miriam's death no doubt was a burden to Moses. The absence of water not only would cause irritation among the nation of Israel, but also with the leadership of Moses and Aaron (v 2). The effect of this great need was collective opposition (v 2b) and verbal strife (rib).

This opposition apparently was initiated by "ringleaders" who called and assembled the people together. Moses faced verbal complaint in verse three by the people who cried out, "If only we had expired or breathed out (gara) our lives when our brethren died before the Lord!" In other words, they were implying that "anything would be better than this!" More pressure is added in verses 4 and 5 as Moses' motives are questioned and he is credited (blamed) for a work that he did not do. It was God not Moses and Aaron who led Israel out into the wilderness. And it was the sin of Israel that resulted in her roaming around in the desert for 40 years; it was not Moses' fault. Moses also faced internal pressure as he recalled the last experience at Kadesh 37 years earlier. He was very concerned that Israel would produce a repeat performance, incur God's judgment again and restrict him from ever entering the land as he so greatly desired.

**In Difficulty God's Prescription is Indispensable**

The leaders, Moses and Aaron, did what all of God's leaders should do in times of pressure and need--they entered God's presence and sought Divine answers (v 6). "They fell upon their faces; and the glory of the Lord appeared unto them." God then gave Moses and Aaron exact prescriptions (commands) which in turn demanded exact obedience (v 8). Moses is explicitly told 1) to take
the rod, 2) to assemble the congregation, and 3) both Moses and Aaron were to speak to the rock.\(^2\)

It is interesting that God told Moses to take "the rod" with him, since he was not to use it, though he did use his rod in other miracles involving water (Num 7:20, 14:16). This time, however, "Moses took the rod from before the LORD." This phrase points to the same rod that budded in order to vindicate the Aaronic priesthood. After this event, it was then kept "before the testimony to be kept as a sign against the rebels" so that God might put an end to Israel's grumblings (Num 17:10). Now Israel is grumbling again, so God tells Moses to get the rod to remind the nation about her former sin of grumbling.

Moses did obey with exact obedience on two of the three commands. He took the rod (v 9) and he with Aaron gathered the congregation together to witness the miracle that God intended to perform. If Moses had obeyed the third command exactly, it would have been a testimony to the people who witnessed. The act of speaking to the rock by its unusual nature would draw attention to the rock and not to Moses. This indeed was God's intention, for the NT describes this rock as none other than Jesus Christ (I Cor 10:4). Thus "speaking to the rock" would reveal the rock as being the source of water and not the efforts of Moses. Moses, however, failed in regard to the third imperative.

### The Sin of Disbelief by Leadership

#### Attitude: Disbelief Manifested in Mood

In the Bible, God speaks of leaders who had moments of unbelief. Such lack of faith manifested itself in despair, such as Elijah who fled from Jezebel and John the Baptist who had moments of doubt concerning Christ. In Numbers 20:10, God records Moses as one who also manifested a lack of complete trust in Yahweh by the attitude he displayed. In this verse he "shows his exasperation, his famous temper (cf Exod 2:11-12), and his astonishing egotism."\(^3\) "The faithful servant of God, worn out with the numerous temptations, allowed himself to be overcome, so that he stumbled, and did not sanctify the Lord."\(^4\) Moses, who needed at this point to fully trust God for patience and self-control did not.

Moses was about to sin internally which like 'slippery steps' would lead to outward disobedience. In verse 10, he displays three
sinful attitudes: 1) impatience, 2) anger, and 3) pride or self-exaltation. His impatience is evidenced by his abrupt appeal for Israel to "listen." His anger is seen as he addresses them as "rebels." Though his description was accurate and true, his tenor was one of anger. Psalm 106:32-33 describes Moses as having been "provoked to wrath at the waters of Meribah . . . [and] because they were rebellious against his spirit, he spoke rashly with his lips." A man's anger never exhibits the righteous behavior that God expects (James 1:20). In his self-righteous anger, Moses then displayed a spirit of pride and independence by his question, "Shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock?" Moses' downfall began when he took additional presumptuous action and spoke to the people (v 10) about their quarrels, threats, and unjustified arguments, rather than doing exclusively what God said; namely, "speak to the rock" (v 8).

Presumption: Disbelief Manifested in Word

Moses' "rash words" mentioned in Psalm 106:32-33 are the words reflected in his implication that he and Aaron had the power to provide water out of the rock. Such pride by its very nature fails to foster true belief in and reverence for Yahweh. Many argue that the word "we" in verse 10 refers not to Moses and Aaron but to Moses and God. The most obvious antecedents to the plural pronoun "we" however are Moses and Aaron. The "we" is blasphemous, nonetheless, whether Moses intended it to refer to himself and Aaron or even to himself and God. The Bible is clear that it was God not Moses, who provided the water out of the rock. In Psalm 78 it is evident that God "split the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them abundant drink like the ocean depths. He brought forth streams also from the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers" (vv 15, 16; cf Isa 48:21). Moses not only usurped God's place in word ("we") but this led also to deed ("he smote the rock").

Disobedience: Disbelief Manifested in Action

In the Bible, God shows no distinction between faith or trust and obedience. Faith always results in obedience and unbelief always results in disobedience. Such was the case with Moses. In Numbers 20:12, God's response to Moses' disobedience reveals his disbelief. The Lord said, "You did not believe [trust in] Me."

Commands omitted. The external manifestation of Moses' sin was two-fold: 1) He did what he was not told to do --- he struck
the rock, and 2) He did not do what he was told to do --- speak to the rock. Omitting from God's commands is just as dangerously wrong as adding to them.

It is important to note that an omission will eventually pave the way for an addition. Because Aaron was Moses' translator (Exod 4:14-17), Moses was to speak to the rock and Aaron was to repeat his words loud enough for all of the people to hear. The sin was not merely in Moses' striking of the rock, but in both his and Aaron's failure to "speak to" it. If the sin was exclusively in Moses' striking of the rock, the transgression of Aaron could not be explained (v 12). This truth reveals that sins of omission are just as costly as sins actually committed outwardly.

**Sins committed.** Along with Moses' failure to speak to the rock as commanded (v 8) his disobedience is seen in his action of striking it. God by commanding Moses to speak to the rock "before the eyes" of Israel intended the people to rejoice at the sight of abundant water and to doubly and trebly rejoice at the knowledge that their God is with them and is showing Himself by one of his happiest miracles. It is this circumstance which Moses, in a fit of indignation, turns into a bitter denunciation; he curses the people, and in smiting the magic rod against the rock, destroys the hallowed moment that God had so clearly intended.6

In order to honor God as "being holy," trust or belief is a prerequisite. The idea in the original is that Moses did not have enough trust in God to treat Him as being holy (v 12). His striking the stone revealed a lack of faith. It had been striking the rock that brought results the last time God provided water for the people (Exod 17:6). Consequently, this time, rather than obeying God's new directions and "speaking to it," Moses struck it and for good measure he struck it twice. Moses' act of striking the rock twice was so done as if producing water "depended upon human exertion, and not upon the power of God alone."7 Moses' disobedience revealed his failure to trust God's faithfulness to His word.

In summary, Moses' sin was an unbelief that manifested itself in: 1) mood, 2) words, and 3) action. His anger, which served as a catalyst, prompted him to utter words he was not to speak. Moses' pride underlies his question "must we bring forth water..." and detracted from Yahweh's exclusive ability to provide the necessary
water. His forceful striking of the rock twice indicates his continued anger as well as his lack of faith in regard to the ability and good will of God to provide water the way He intended. Moses' reaction as a whole was diametrically opposed to the plan and intention of Yahweh which Moses was made to understand very clearly.8

The Increased Demands of Leadership

Leaders are Responsible to Pay for Their Own Sin

Deuteronomy 1:37 has caused much controversy concerning the time Moses' sin and restriction from the land took place. In this verse Moses says, "Also the Lord was angry with me for your sakes, saying, Thou also shalt not go in thither." In the context (vv 34-40) of verse 37, Moses is basically recalling the unbelief coupled with grumbling and complaining of Israel when they refused to enter the land after hearing the bad report of the ten spies (Num 14:28-30). At that time God took an oath saying, "Not one of these men, this evil generation, shall see the good land which I swore to give your fathers" (Deut 1:35). The only exceptions were Caleb (v 36) and Joshua (v 38); Moses was not even included as one of the exceptions. Although Moses did not have part in the unbelief evidenced at the time Israel refused to enter the land (Num 14:26-27), the implication from verse 35 is that God in His foreknowledge knew Moses also would not enter the Promised Land. Though the announcement of Moses' exclusion from the land occurred 38 years after that of the Israelites at Kadesh, the reason for the exclusions was the same --- unbelief. While Israel refused to believe God's word at Kadesh (Num 14:22-23; Deut 1:32), Moses refused to believe God's word by the waters of Meribah at Kadesh (Num 20:12).

The phrase "for your sakes" (v 37) still needs explanation. The phrase, which occurs two other times in Deuteronomy (3:26; 4:21) seems to show that Moses is shifting the blame for God's anger and judgment toward him. The questions that must be answered are: When was God angry with Moses because of Israel? And when did God say, "not even you shall enter there"? Basically two views are held to by theologians brave enough not to by-pass this perplexity. One view bases its position on the proposition that leadership bears full responsibility for the sins of the people it leads. For
example, an employer whose worker makes a mistake stands fully responsible for that error.

The reason for Moses' exclusion from the promised land, in this context (Deut. 1:34-39), seems to be directly related to his responsibility for the Israelites (i.e. "on your account") before the Lord. Although Moses was personally without blame for the failures of the Israelites at Kadesh-Barnea, his identification with the people as their leader meant that he also accepted with them the result of their failure.9

This view asserts that Moses' restriction from the land was because of corporate guilt, not individual guilt. That is, Moses as the representative of Israel was corporately restricted from entering the land while at Kadesh-Barnea (Num 14:22-39), while being proven and declared to be individually guilty by his own personal unbelief and rebellion 38 years later (Num 20:12-13). Those who espouse this interpretation make the application that sin affects others. When the ten spies lacked faith and sinned, Israel also sinned. The national sin left its toll on Moses who was forensically restricted from entering the Promised Land "on account of” Israel.

Whereas, in I Kings 14:16, the people are punished because of the leader's apostasy, in Deuteronomy 1:37, 3:26, 4:21, the leader is punished because of the peoples' lack of faith. This truth, is further evidenced in II Kings 8:19, where Judah is preserved by God “on account of David His servant's sake.”10

While this view does contain elements of truth, it conflicts with God's principle that "everyone shall die for his own sin" (Jer 31:30; Ezek 18:19-24).

According to a second view, in Deuteronomy 1:37 it, at first glance, appears that Moses was forbidden to enter Canaan in consequence of the people's disobedience at Kadesh in the second year of the Exodus. This problem is easily resolved when it is remembered that the context is primarily hortatory and secondarily historical. Keil and Delitzsch state the following:

We are not to infer from the close connection in which this event, which did not take place according to Numbers 20:1-13 till the second arrival of the congregation at Kadesh, is placed with the earlier judgment of God at Kadesh, that the two were
contemporaneous, and so supply, after "the Lord was angry with me," the words "on that occasion." For Moses did not intend to teach the people history and chronology, but to set before them the holiness of the judgments of the Lord. By using the expression "for your sakes," Moses did not wish to free himself from guilt.11

Moses says "because of you" not to blame-shift, but to warn Israel not to sin in the same way she did before.

When was God angry with Moses? And when did God restrict him from the land? It was not at Kadesh-Barnea when Israel sinned; rather, Numbers 20:12 and 27:14 reveal that it was on account of Moses' own presumptive anger and disobedience at the same spot, but on a different occasion 38 years later.

God's divine commentary on the sin of Moses in Psalm 106:32-33, provides an indisputable answer as to when Moses sinned and faced the judgment of God. In Psalm 106 God describes Israel's rebelliousness in chronological order. Israel moves from Egypt (v 7), through the Red Sea (vv 8-12), into the wilderness (v 13-18), to Sinai (vv 19-23), and then to Kadesh-Barnea (vv 24-27), and Baal-peor (vv 28-31). After God had already mentioned Israel's refusal to enter the land at Kadesh (vv 24-27), in verses 32-33 God introduces a distinct account; namely that of Meribah, where it is said that "it went hard with Moses because of them." This context clearly states that it was at Meribah that "they [Israel] provoked Moses to wrath. It was at Meribah where it went "evil [hard, bad, troublesome from ra'a] with Moses." In other words, it was at this point that Moses sinned and received the consequences for it. It was at this time, when the provocation to wrath and evil was "because of them." In verse 33, God gives the reason why it was "because of them" (v 32) that Moses was provoked to wrath and evil. He states that they (Israel) rebelled against his (Moses') spirit with the result that Moses "spoke rashly with his lips."

Deuteronomy 1:37 and 4:21 declare that God was "angry" with Moses. The word used is 'amnap which literally means "to breathe" or "to emit breath through the nostrils." As a verb it occurs only in the figurative sense "to be angry."12 In both Deuteronomy 1:37 and 4:21 the verb is used in the Hithpael stem and indicates God's action of showing Himself angry with Moses. A very clear statement in Deuteronomy 32:51 records God telling Moses that he would die as Aaron did (v 50) "because you (plural) broke faith with Me in
the midst of the sons of Israel. . . [and] because you did not treat Me as Holy in the midst of the sons of Israel" (v 51).

Leaders are Prone to Sin like the People They Lead

In Numbers 27:14 God clearly reveals that Moses sinned just like the people did. In addressing Moses and Aaron, God said, "You disobeyed [rebelled, plural from marah] My command in the Desert of Zin in the disobedience [marah] of the congregation." Moses' failure to carry out the Lord's instructions precisely was as much an act of unbelief as the people's failure to trust God's promises instead of the spies' pessimistic reports (Num 14:11).13

Like Moses the sin of Israel began in their hearts (Psa 78:8, 95:7-11), manifested itself in their speech (they "murmured" Deut 1:27, 34; Num 14:2), and resulted in disobedient action (they refused to obey the command to enter the land, Num 13:31-33). Israel's disobedience was also like that of Moses in that they presumed upon God when they later attempted to take the land in their own strength (Num 14:41-45).

While Moses' sin matched Israel's in degree (quality), a distinction is seen in the duration (quantity) involved. Moses' one-time act of unbelief and disobedient rebellion is contrasted with the continual sin of Israel. In Numbers 20:10 Moses addresses Israel calling them "you rebels." The phrase "you rebels," a masculine plural Qal participle of marah, literally "the rebelling ones" describes their rebellion as a permanent condition. Hebrews 3:10 quotes Psalm 95:10 to describe the first generation of the Exodus as ones who "always go astray in their heart." It is further evident that Israel had persisted in her unbelief. In Deuteronomy 1:32 the participle is used with the negative ("you were not believing") to indicate that the nation's unbelief was continual. When Israel sinned at Kadesh-Barnea, God pointed to their continual disbelief and unfaithfulness (v 51). He declared that they put Him to the test ten times (v 22) in only two years. Apparently those times were: 1) at the Red Sea (Exod 14:11-12); 2) at Marah (Exod 15:23,24); 3) in the wilderness of Sin (Exod 16:2); 4) and 5) in connection with Manna (Exod 16:20,27); 6) at Rephidim (Exod 17:1-3); 7) at Horeb (Exod 32:7); 8) at Taberah (Num 11:1); 9) the complaint of the mixed multitude (Num 11:4); and now 10) at Kadesh-Bamea (Num 14).

While God, on the one hand, declared that "all the men. . . [who] have put Me to the test these ten times and have not listened
Leaders Face Stricter Judgment than the People They Lead

Judgment on leadership is more strict because of the fact that all people leaders should know better. James 3:1 says, "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment." Jesus declared the principle that "to whom much is given much shall be required" (Luke 12:48).

While Israel faced God's judgment for her perpetual rebellion and unbelief, Moses did so for his one-time act.

Moses' unbelief was not a total distrust in the omnipotence of God, but rather was a momentary wavering of that immovable assurance, which the two heads of the nation ought to have shown the congregation, but did not show. Moses' transgression was extremely serious because it was committed in public. In front of the entire congregation of Israel, Moses "broke faith" with Yahweh (Deut 32:51). The phrase "broke faith" is derived from the verb *m'l*t meaning "to act treacherously" or "to be faithless." The fact that it is a perfect verb points to Moses' one-time act of faithlessness "at the waters of Meribah." The verb translated "treat Me as Holy" *kiddashetem* again points to the one-time incident when Moses and Aaron failed to "set God apart" by their disobedience.

While Israel faced the consequences for their continual faithlessness and failure to uphold the holiness of God, Moses as the public leader faced a stricter judgment, when he received the consequences for his one-time sin. This should serve as a sobering warning to anyone who is leading God's flock today.

The High Cost of Disobedience in Leadership

Failure in Testimony is the Result of Disobedience

A testimony fails despite pragmatic results. When Numbers 20:8 is compared with verse 11, one finds that although Moses totally disobeyed God's instructions, God still provided abundant water. Moses' disobedience still brought about results. Though Moses'
striking of the rock brought forth water, it was not produced in the
divinely intended way. This sin marred Moses' testimony as he failed
to sanctify God "in the eyes of the children of Israel." An important
lesson for contemporary leaders and preachers to learn is that the
end does not justify the means and that results do not justify
disobedience.

A testimony fails despite the fact that God still receives glory.
God is concerned that His leaders uphold Him as trustworthy and
holy in the midst of His people, because His reputation is vitally
important to Him (Deut 32:51; Ezek 36:16-38). Moses' failure in
preventing the full power of Yahweh from becoming evident in the
eyes of Israel robbed God of the fear and reverence that was due
Him. The miracle would have been more impressive if Moses spoke
to the rock rather than striking it as he had done before in the
presence of the elders (Exod 17:5-6).

However, in contrast to Moses' faithlessness God demonstrated
His faithfulness because the waters flowed "abundantly." God
received glory even though it was not through His leader Moses.
Numbers 20:13 has an assertion contrasting from that in verse 12.
On the one hand, while God said that He was not shown to be Holy
(qadash) by Moses; Yahweh proved Himself holy (qadash) among
the people (v 13).

Deuteronomy 32:51 reveals in an interesting play on words that it
was at Kadesh (qadesh) that Moses failed to uphold God as holy
(qiddash). And yet it was at Kadesh where God received glory even
through man's disobedience (Num 20:13).

Restriction in Blessings is the Result of Disobedience
The result of Moses' disobedience was a limitation on the
blessings he could have received. While God no doubt had a desire
for Moses to enter the Promised Land, because of sin he was now
restricted to merely seeing it from afar. He saw it from "Abarim,"
the range of mountains east of the Jordan Valley and Dead Sea
(Numbers 27:12; Deut 34:4-5). Moses is limited to a "look" at the
land. In Deuteronomy 32, God commands him to go up Mount
Nebo and "look at the land of Canaan. . . for you shall see the land at a distance, but you shall not go there" (vv 49, 50, 52).

Desecrating Yahweh's name is extremely serious as evidenced by the magnitude of the restriction. "The retribution stands in direct relation to the nature of the transgression and its enormity." It is also very important to note that the severity of the discipline is matched to the sin based on Moses' position as the leader of the people.

The regret of a leader. The result of disobedience is always regret. The regret of Moses is evident by his repeated statements that he would not enter the land (Deut 1:37; 3:27; 31:2). His regret is also evident by his pleading with God to enter the land (Deut 3:23-29), and by his somber statements such as: "I shall die in this land, I shall not cross the Jordan" (Deut 4:22).

In Deuteronomy 3:23-29 the lesson to be learned is that sin leaves lasting scars (consequences). In this section Moses unveils, in his personal testimony, his earnest desire to enter the Promised Land. Moses testified that he pleaded or quite literally "sought favor or grace" (qnn) with Yahweh to enter the land. "The verb used (qnn) is a strong one, implying a solemn request for the Lord to be compassionate (see Psa 30:7-8 for a similar use)." In verse 24 Moses addresses God as "Master Yahweh" or "Lord Yahweh" ('adonay yhwh) a name or title for God used only twice in Deuteronomy in prayers of Moses (cf 9:26). The combined title is indicative of a deep personal tone of request. Moses in desperation appealed to God's character to His greatness, strength, uniqueness, and mighty works. He appealed saying that he as Yahweh's servant had only just begun to see all that God would do (v 24). Moses' request shows the deep sorrow and tragedy in his life.

He had begun to see the marvelous works of the Lord, from the Exodus to the conquest of the lands east of the Jordan. But now, just when the climax was drawing near, he would be unable to see the Lord's fulfillment of the ancient promise. It was a promise to which he had devoted his whole life, and the thought that he would not see its fulfillment was too much for him to accept without question.

In verse 23, Moses next appealed to God's emotions, begging Yahweh to allow him to cross over and see the "fair land" beyond the Jordan that "good hill country and Lebanon" (v 25). All of this
pleading, however, was to no avail. Because God had declared that Moses would not enter the land, He would not so much as listen to Moses' plea. But God in reply said, "Enough! (rab) Do not continue to speak to Me anymore about this matter."

Leaders need to be on guard for the unintentional misplacing of priorities. Moses' persistence in intercessory prayer for Israel was a great quality he possessed. His request for God to alter His prohibition by His grace was probably not in itself illegitimate either. However, Moses' persistence in requesting a reversal of God's prohibition in a sense reflects a slight shift in Moses' focus. The vision of the promise had become a consuming passion to set foot in the land, but the vision had slipped from the Lord of the promise to the promise itself. Moses had taken his eyes off of the God of Canaan Land and wrongly refocused them on Canaan Land itself.

The removal of a leader. Disobedience brings its own consequences. That God was now ready to remove Moses from his position of leadership is evident by His stern words, "You shall not bring this assembly into the land" (Numbers 20:12). God's refusal to hear and heed Moses' proposal in Deuteronomy 3:23-29 reveals the tragic result of sin.

Forgiveness of sin does not always carry with it alleviation of the consequences of that sin. While sin can be removed, its scars very often cannot be. For example, when God restricts a divorced man from holding the office of pastor or deacon (II Tim 3:2,12) this does not imply that such a sin is unforgivable. What it does mean, as with Moses, is that the scars of that sin are not removed. The leadership of Moses faced a restriction and God's leaders must be devoid of such restrictions to remain qualified to serve in an official capacity.

Does God's refusal to restore Moses to the former privilege of entering the land mean that God did not forgive Moses for his sin? No! David, who sinned with Bathsheba (II Sam 11:1-13) and murdered Uriah her husband (II Sam 11:14-27) was forgiven (II Sam 12:1-15; Psa 51). But it is vitally important to note that the repercussions, the after-effects, never were removed. Nathan the prophet told David, "Now, therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house. . . The child also that is born to you shall surely die" (II Sam 12:10, 13). The Bible's universal, unchanging principle that "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal 6:7) was again proven true.
The result of Moses' disobedience was a premature death. Moses would be gathered to his people, just as Aaron was, even though he might have enjoyed many more years of leadership. This is evidenced by the words following the account of his death, "Although Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died, his eye was not dim, nor his vigor abated" (Deut 34:7).

**The replacement of a leader.** No leader is irreplaceable. Even though Moses was the most uniquely privileged human leader to ever live (Deut 34:10-12), God replaced him with the faithful man-Joshua. As "great" a shepherd as Moses was, he was not indispensable. Yahweh saw fit to remove Moses and replace him. God, foreknowing the damage one sin could cause, was not found "short-changed" to meet the need that resulted from sin in the life of His leader. The same truth applies today. None of God's preachers, teachers, etc. are irreplaceable. While it is never God's will for one of His representatives to be disqualified, God in His holiness demands that His standards be upheld (I Tim 3:1-7) and replacements be made as necessary.

The sheep learn by watching the shepherd. Therefore, the shepherd's life is to be a model for them to follow. When a leader's testimony fails he then becomes incapable of credible teaching. For the welfare of the people he must step down so that God can replace him as was necessary in the case of Moses (Num 27:18-20).

In Numbers 27:16-17 Moses demonstrates his concern over his failure in his responsibility as leader by requesting that the Lord place a spiritual man over the people. In his concern "that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep without a shepherd" (Num 27:17) Moses demonstrates the compassion of a great leader. Even though the people had provoked Moses to sin at Meribah and he had missed his heart's desire to enter the Promised Land, Moses still had a loving concern for the people. This same type of concern is demonstrated to an even greater degree in Matthew 9:36 and Mark 6:34 by the "Great Shepherd" Jesus Christ. Just as Moses when he was about to die prayed that a replacement for himself be given to an unworthy people, Jesus Christ knowing of His approaching death and of the desperate need "was moved with compassion" and asked his disciple to pray for workers to be sent out into the harvest fields (v 38). Israel at the time of Christ's public ministry was without a spiritual leader among the nation. In fact the leaders of the theocratic kingdom at this time were so totally corrupt that when
Jesus saw the multitudes, "he felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and downcast, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matt 9:36).

Even though Israel would enter the land and Moses would not he did not let this heart-breaking personal loss keep him from being faithful to fulfilling his task. Moses was obedient in proclaiming God's Word to Israel even though he knew he would die. As the people are being prepared to enter the land, Moses gives them God's Word and warns against the greatest danger they will face. In Deuteronomy 4:21-22 he warns the people to take notice of his own fate which was the result of divine chastening for disobedience. The people, having been reminded of the result of Moses' disobedience in leadership, that is, his restriction from entering the land, are warned not to forget the covenant (v 23). Such forgetfulness would lead to disobedient idolatry (v 36b) and result in God's judgment, that is, expulsion from the land (vv 26-27). The strong warning is based on the fact that "the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God" (v 24). Because the covenant relationship was one of love, initiated by the love of God and responded to by the love of Israel, "to construct images would be to indicate that the first love of the Israelites had been forgotten and to this the response of the Lord would be jealousy."²⁰ In the twelfth chapter of Hebrews after describing the chastening or discipline of the believer (vv 3-11) and the moral purity demanded by a Holy God (vv 12-27), the Lord commands the believer to show gratitude and awe (v 28), based on the fact that "our God is a consuming fire" (v 29).

**Conclusion**

Just as Moses and the nation of Israel found out by experience that it was impossible to escape divine discipline for sin, the NT believer, especially the leadership, is also warned that divine discipline for sin is inescapable. "If those did not escape when they refused Him Who warned them on earth, much less shall we escape who turn away from Him [Jesus Christ] who warns from Heaven" (Heb 12:25). With a new covenant, more revelation, and greater benefits having been provided by Christ, much more is expected of Christians today than was expected of Moses and the nation Israel. Christ's leaders today must not depend upon their experience or age
to keep them from sin and its resulting disqualifications. Moses' sin came at the end of a life of great spiritual victories, faithful service and astonishing miracles. In spite of all this he was still disqualified because of his sin. If you are a leader today "take heed lest ye fall." Leaders should dread the thought of being "a castaway" of being rendered useless; of being disqualified for service (I Cor 9:27). The believer's and especially the leader's goal ought to be that stated by the apostle Paul, who when ready to die said, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith!"

Notes
2 Note the plural verb form dibbaretem.
3 Eugene Arden, "How Moses Failed God" JBL 76 (1957) 52
4 Keil and Delitzsch, "The Pentateuch" Commentary on the OT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985) 1:131
5 Literally "you continually disobedient ones!"
6 Arden, "How Moses Failed God," 52
7 Keil, Pentateuch, 131
8 Margalioth, "Transgression of Moses," 218
9 Peter C Craigie, "The Book of Deuteronomy" in NICOT ed by RK Harrison (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976) 105
10 Thomas W Mann, "Theological Reflections on the Denial of Moses" JBL 98 (1979) 490
11 Keil, Pentateuch, 289
14 Keil, Pentateuch, 130
15 Brown, Driver, Briggs, Hebrew and English Lexicon, 591
16 Margalioth, "Transgression of Moses," 226
17 Ibid 228
18 Craigie, Deuteronomy, 126
19 Ibid
20 Ibid, 137

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THE INSCRIBED TABLETS FROM TELL DEIR ḌʿALLA
PART 1*

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During the 1964 season of excavations at Tell Deir ḌʿAlla on the eastern side of the mid-Jordan Valley, the Dutch expedition led by H. J. Franken recovered eleven clay tablets from the floors of two storerooms, Rooms IX and X, located across a courtyard from the Late-Bronze-Age temple at the site.¹ Three of the tablets were inscribed with texts written in a previously unknown script, seven of the tablets were incised only with dots, and one tablet appeared to be merely a lump of clay squeezed by hand. Franken is to be complimented and thanked for his prompt publication of the find. His manuscript announcing the discovery of the tablets was completed but two weeks after the end of the excavations.² All three of his articles which dealt with the tablets in one way or another appeared in journals dated to 1964.³

In the present study, the inscribed tablets are designated by Roman numerals, as follows:

Tablet I (or Text I) = Deir ḌʿAlla No. 1449
Tablet II (or Text II) = Deir ḌʿAlla No. 1441
Tablet III (or Text III) = Deir ḌʿAlla No. 1440

The reason for this particular sequence will be made clear in my treatment of the decipherment of the texts and the historical implications involved. Franken has provided line drawings and some

*Editor's Note: The continuation and conclusion of this study, in "Part II," is currently planned for the Summer 1989 issue of AUSS.

³ H. J. Franken, "The Stratigraphic Context of the Clay Tablets Found at Deir ḌʿAlla," PEQ 96 (1964): 73-78, plus the articles mentioned in nn. 1 and 2, above. For the excavations at the site in general, see idem, Excavations at Tell Deir ḌʿAlla: I (Leiden, 1969).
photographs of these three inscribed tablets and line drawings of all eight unwritten tablets, plus photographs of six of the latter. My own line drawings given herein are based on those of Franken. The line drawings for the first two inscribed tablets appear below, and those for the third inscribed tablet will be set forth in the subsequent installment (Part II) of this article, in conjunction with the discussion of the dotted tablets that will be given there.

1. Studies of the Tablets

Unfortunately, relatively little has been done in studies of these tablets since they were published. In a passing remark, W. F. Albright suggested that they might have originated with the Philistines because of "their similarity to Minoan tablets." As Trude Dotan noted, however, "this extremely attractive proposal is difficult to substantiate because the derived Philistine pottery at Deir 'Alla was found in the Iron-Age-I levels following the destruction of the temple complex." The first two studies of the Deir 'Alla tablets appeared the year after they were discovered. In the first study of them, A. van den Branden concluded that their script was most directly related to early Arabic scripts. While van den Branden made a useful beginning in the study of these tablets, his special reliance upon Arabic scripts has not produced an overall solution to their texts. H. Cazelles followed up van den Branden's study by agreeing that some of the letters in this script were related to early Arabic forms, but he also noted that other letters resembled those in the Phoeni-

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4 For his line drawings of all eleven tablets, see "Stratigraphic Context," p. 73, Fig. 1. A further line drawing, in larger size, of text I appears in "Clay Tablets," p. 380; and such a drawing of text III appears in the same article on p. 378. Photographs of six of the eight dotted texts appear in "Excavations," Plate Va. Franken has also published photographs of inscribed texts II and III in "Excavations," Plate Vb, and "Clay Tablets," Plate 1, respectively.


6 T. Dotan, The Philistines and Their Material Culture (Jerusalem, 1982), p. 84.

cian alphabet. He suggested that attention should be given to their relations in that direction.8

Almost a decade passed before the Deir cAlla tablets were treated again. Following up the idea that the script of these tablets might have come from the Aegean world, Z. Mayani attempted to decipher the tablets on the basis of Etruscan.9 His results are so exceptional that they are not dealt with further here.

The most recent study of one of these tablets was published more than a decade ago. In 1975, G. E. Mendenhall transcribed and translated one of the three written tablets, but this was only as a passing comment in a study on another subject.10 As a result, Mendenhall's cursory treatment provides no detailed interpretation of the palaeography or linguistics involved. Mendenhall sees the text as written in a script related to hieroglyphic Luwian but conveying a message in a Semitic language. The message is the record of a delivery of some donkeys. Because of its linguistic consistency, Mendenhall's is probably the best of the previous studies of these tablets.

My own interest in these tablets dates to a seminar I taught at Andrews University in the Spring term of 1985. A graduate student in that seminar, Aecio Cairus from Argentina, undertook a study of the Deir cAlla tablets for his research project. I did not encourage him in this undertaking because at the time I considered the tablets undecipherable. Cairus persevered, however, and eventually convinced me that he had indeed identified seven more letters of this script beyond those identified by earlier researchers (see Section 3 below). Because of the difficulty of the script, this was a remarkable achievement.

On various occasions during the course of that seminar, Cairus and I discussed the identification of individual signs, the meaning of, different words, and the overall significance of the texts. In spite of the progress made, the texts remained difficult. In the final written report of his research, Cairus presented three different ways in which the two tablets with which he dealt (texts I and III) could

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be translated. He has subsequently presented the results of his work on this subject to the Midwestern sectional meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature that met at Andrews University in February 1986.

While I am deeply indebted to Cairus for his identification of the letters which I accepted from him, plus some of the words in my translations which were first proposed by him, other lexical items and the overall translation and interpretation of the tablets proposed below are my own responsibility and the result of my continuing work on this subject. I have also added here my translation of the third and more badly damaged tablet (text II) and my interpretation of the dotted tablets with which Cairns did not deal.

2. The Archaeological Context

These tablets were found on the floors of two storerooms that were located immediately adjacent to the sanctuary at the site. Since the pottery in the final phase of the sanctuary and in the storerooms was essentially the same, it is evident that all of the buildings in the complex were destroyed at approximately the same time. A faience vase bearing the cartouche of Queen Taousert, who reigned in Egypt at the beginning of the twelfth century, was found in the final destruction level of the sanctuary; hence a date for this destruction just after 1200 B.C. is appropriate from the archaeological evidence.

This date of just after 1200 B.C. for the final destruction of the sanctuary complex, however, does not necessarily provide a specific date for the writing of the tablets. The archaeological evidence indicates only that they could not have been written any later than ca. 1200; it does not tell us how long before that final destruction they were written. Several objects found in the sanctuary complex antedated its final phase by rather long periods of time; A Hyksos scarab was found in the storerooms with the tablets, and it must have been more than three centuries old by the time of that destruction.11 Two large painted LB-I vessels were found in the cella of the temple, and they came from an earlier phase of that structure.12 It is possible, therefore, that these tablets could have originated from a time considerably earlier than the destruction of the final

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11 Franken, "Excavations," Plate VIII, no. 3.
12 Ibid., Plate I.
phase of the sanctuary. The archaic nature of their script suggests that they probably did.

3. Analysis and Decipherment of the Script

The process of deciphering the script used on these tablets has been a slow one, to which each of the studies cited above has made a contribution. For reasons of space, identifications for signs in previous studies which have been rejected are not here discussed.

The first of the letters in this script, which van den Branden correctly identified, was the gimel. It consists of a vertical stroke which curves to the right at its head. The form is similar in later West-Semitic scripts, but the head became more angular.

Van den Branden's second correct letter was the pe. This he identified on the basis of parallels with the bow-shaped pe of Thamudic and Safaitic scripts. In Canaanite writing the pe was written with more of a curve, and it does not straighten out as much at the ends of the stroke.

Van den Branden was also the first to identify the samek in these texts. It is a typical West-Semitic samek, which consists of three horizontal strokes on a vertical stem.

The final letter, utilizable from van den Branden's identifications, is the taw. It, too, is typical of West-Semitic taws in that it was written with two crossed strokes.

The kaph, which was first identified by Cazelles, has a trefoil head and a vertical tail like the later forms of the West-Semitic kaph. The use and length of the tail of the kaph seem to vary among the Deir cAlla tablets.

The yod, which Gazelles identified, lacks the forked head of the later West-Semitic yods. It was written here with just a dot, or not even that, at the head of the vertical stroke.

The res that Mendenhall recognized has a direct parallel with the head-shaped sign with which the res was written in the Proto-Sinaitic script.

The first of the letters which Cairus identified is the beth. Later West-Semitic beths have triangular heads and angular tails. What Cairus noted here was that there is a letter with a triangular head, but it is represented only by three corner dots. The tail of this letter consists only of a straight downstroke without any bend in it.

The circular infolded lamed, which Cairus recognized, comes fairly close to the lamed in the abecedar of the cIzbet Sartah Ostracon.13

13 The lamed occurs as the 10th letter in the second line; the 12th, 26th, and 29th letters of the fourth line; and the 12th letter of the fifth or alphabetic line of the cIzbet Sartah Ostracon. See M. Kochavi, "An Ostracon of the Period of the Judges from cIzbet Sartah," Tel Aviv 4 (1977): 1-13.
Figure 1. Table of Letters of the Script of Deir 'Alla

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<td>Taw</td>
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Cairus's distinction between the *mem* and the *nun* is especially important for understanding these Deir ḍAlla texts. In later scripts, both of these letters had wavy-lined heads extending to the left from the head of their downstrokes. The *mem*, however, has multiple notches, while the *nun* has only one. In these texts Cairus has identified the wavy vertical line as the *nun* and the broad vertical V as the *mem*. This seems to run in the opposite direction from the parallels. Cairus adopted this position on the basis of the sense that they brought to their respective words. When he showed me these identifications, I checked some of the early alphabets for parallels and found one for the *mem* in the abcedary of the ḍIzbet Sartah Ostracon.14 Thus the *mem* that we find here has a parallel in at least one other early alphabet. That leaves the alternate letter as a *nun*.

*ṣAyin* was originally written in the form of a horizontal oval or circle with a dot in it, representing the eye with a pupil. What Cairus recognized here is that we have half of this sign--one curved line with a dot in it, but lacking the lower curved line and being turned 90º to stand vertically.

Cairus's bow-shaped *sin* is relatively close in form to the later West-Semitic *sinُ*, except that it has been rotated 90º to stand vertically like the *ṣayin*.

The vertical box-shaped sign at the beginning of the one word on the side of text III has been difficult to identify. It looks most like *ḥeth*, but it does not function like *ḥeth* because it is followed by a clear example of an *ṣayin*. The combination of *ḥeth* followed by *ṣayin* does not occur in West-Semitic languages. In his search for another letter with which to identify this sign, Cairus settled upon the *ṣayin*. If this sign is rotated 90º, like the two previous letters discussed, and its excess of crossbars is removed, this sign would resemble the later *ṣayin*. The key to this identification may lie in the fact that the letter's top horizontal crossbar extends between the two vertical strokes at an angle, as does the vertical connector between the horizontal strokes of the later *ṣayin*.

There are some additional signs which should now be added to the foregoing list. The first of these proposed here is *ḥ*. One example of a vertical box-shaped sign with one central crossbar appears in text II, and

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14 The alphabet of the ḍIzbet Sartah Ostracon has been misinterpreted with regard to *mem* and *nun*. It has been thought that the last letter in the alphabet before the break in the middle of the sherd was the *nun* and that the *mem* was missing. Actually, the last letter before the break is the *mem* and the *nun* was written back in the sixth position of the letters in the alphabet. It is the standard notched form of the *nun* that was written there in error, and to compensate for this error the scribe wrote the *waw*, the correct letter of that position, underneath the *nun*. That makes the broad letter like the v-shaped letter of the Tell Deir ḍAlla tablets' *mem*. For details, see the line drawing of the ostracon which accompanies Kochavi's article referred to in n. 13.
another occurs in text I. While this sign looks something like heth, heth does not make sense in these contexts while he does, and he is the letter that looks most like heth. The clue to identifying he here may lie in the facts that only one central crossbar extends between the vertical strokes and that the vertical stroke on the left appears to be less deeply incised than the one on the right.

Both Cazelles and Cairus considered identifying the letter with the semicircle atop the vertical stroke as a waw, but in the end they rejected that identification. That original identification is retained here. This letter looks very much like the waws in other West-Semitic alphabets, and it functions well in these texts as a waw.

The triangular letter which consists of only three dots has a head which is similar to the head of the beth, but it does not have a tail, as does the beth. The letter in later alphabets which has a triangular head but only a rudimentary tail is the dalet; hence this letter has been identified as a dalet here.

There appears to be another example of the zayin present here, this one in text II. It is also a vertical box-shaped sign, but it has no central crossbar, only top and bottom crossbars, and the top crossbar is incised at an angle like that of the zayin on the side of text III. If this sign is rotated 90º and its bottom crossbar is removed, it also looks like the later zayin.

Together, these letter identifications yield the alphabet that is outlined in Figure 1. While the forms of some of these letters are unusual and quite archaic, most of them can still be related to forms known from other early West-Semitic alphabets. From the standpoint of these relations, there is no need to identify this script as non-Canaanite. It should rather be thought of as compatible with other early Canaanite scripts.

Before proceeding to the transliteration and a translation of the texts of the three tablets, the long slash marks inscribed in these texts should be mentioned. The slash marks are clearly word dividers. They make, in fact, much better word dividers than the short vertical strokes or dots that were used in later texts.

4. Text I: Pethor Smitten
(Deir cAlla No. 1449)

General Introduction
In connection with text I and also the further two written tablets, the pattern of treatment is as follows (indicated by side subheads): First the transliteration and translation are given; next
my line drawing of the particular tablet is presented (as given in line drawing below); then general introductory comments are made (whenever there are such); following those comes the analysis of the text upon which my transliteration and translation are based; and finally, attention is given to the historical and geographical implications of the information elicited from the text. In tablet I, which is inscribed with only one line, the final two items require but one side heading each, whereas in tablets II and III, each of which contains more than one line, the headings for these two final areas of treatment will be on a line-by-line basis.

Transliteration and Translation of Text I:

\[\text{lm} / \text{mk.} / \text{wtm.y} / \text{whm} / \text{mk.} / \text{ptr}\]

(la) "To you (have come) a smiter and a finisher,
(lb) and they (are) the smiters of Pethor."

The Line Drawing:

\[\text{Image of tablet with inscription}\]

\textit{Analysis of the Text}

This text was written all on one line located along the edge of the tablet, and all six boxes for the words of this text were marked off on this line. The superior and inferior flat surfaces of the tablet were not incised. The first letter of the first word can be identified as a circular infolded lamed, comparable to that of the \(\text{Elz} \text{bet Sartah Ostracon}. This is followed by a standard form of the \text{kapf} with a trefoil head and vertical tail. The large \text{V} of the \text{mem} concludes this word. \text{Lkm} divides nicely into the prefixed preposition / and the suffixed pronoun \text{km}, second person plural. It translates as, "To you. . . ." The position of this prepositional phrase suggests that a form of the verb "to be" should be understood with it, here translated freely as "have come."

The first noun which tells what came to the people was written with a large notched \text{mem}, a trefoil \text{kapf}, and a dot following the \text{kapf}. This fits either one of two words in Biblical Hebrew-\text{makk}a as the noun for "blow, stroke, wound, defeat"; or the Hiphil participle \text{makk}e from the derivative root \text{nkh}, "to beat, strike, smite, defeat." Either the noun or the
verb would bring satisfactory meaning to this passage, but the verbal form has been preferred for its emphasis on agency over result: thus, "smiter."

No indicator of the final vowel was written, but a dot does follow the kaph both here and in the same word in the fifth box. In Biblical Hebrew the kaph in these forms was doubled by using a dagesh forte. It looks very much as if that was the scribe's intent here by use of this dot.

The third word is introduced by a waw with a forked head, which should serve as a conjunction. Therefore a form and a function similar to those of the preceding word are thus expected. The taw and mem from this word's root occur next, and they are clear. They are followed by a dot and a plain vertical stroke of the yod. The most direct relationship is to the root tmm, "to finish, complete." If the dot doubles the letter that it follows, as it appears to do elsewhere in this text, the yod following could provide the reason why it should function in this way. When endings were added to this Hebrew verb, its doubled forms appeared. This final yod probably is not a pronominal suffix. More likely, it represents the i-vowel of the old genitive case ending, a case ending which would be appropriate here with a word that ends a prepositional phrase. My translation of this word is "finisher."

The next word begins with a standard form of the waw with a forked head. This should serve as a conjunction that introduces the other major statement of the text. This is followed by the vertical box-shaped sign, which has been identified as the he rather than heth. He also makes better sense here. The last sign of this word is the large V-shaped mem that has already been seen three times in this text. The word present here is w + hm, or the conjunction followed by the third person masculine plural independent pronoun, "they." The natural plural antecedent of this pronoun should be the two objects mentioned together immediately before it, the "smiter" and the "finisher."

The fifth word in this line is the same as the second. It consists of a mem followed by a kaph and a dot. As in the previous case, this should be taken as a Hiphil participle from nkh, "to smite." For the third time in this line a dot appears to function as doubling the consonant that it follows. Since the subject of this participle is in the plural, the participle should be plural too. But it lacks the mem of the plural ending, so it probably should be taken as in construct with the following word. The final vowel of the plural construct was not written out here. With the verb "to be" understood, this second statement should thus far be translated as, "and they (are) the smiters of. . . ."

The object which was smitten by these two "smiters" (i.e., by the "smiter" and "finisher" in the first statement) was named at the end of the line, and that name reads quite clearly. Its first two letters are the pe and taw, which van den Branden identified, and its final sign is the head-shaped letter, which Mendenhall recognized as the res. The name of the
object which received these two blows or attacks is, therefore, *ptr*. These consonants can be vocalized quite readily to yield the name "Pethor."

**Historical and Geographical Implications**

Pethor is identified in Num 22:5 as the home of Balaam the prophet. This text thus provides us with an identification for that site, which previously was in dispute. Both the location of Pethor and the ancient name of Tell Deir ʿAlāa have been uncertain, but thanks to this text, those two puzzle pieces can now be put together by identifying Tell Deir ʿAlāa as Pethor. Further discussion of this identification follows later in this study, in Part II of this article. The translation developed here for this six-word line thus not only identifies as Pethor the site at which the tablet was found, but also indicates that Pethor had been attacked by two successive waves of attackers. Although this text does not identify those attackers, it appears that the related tablet written in the same scribal hand (II) does do so.

5. Text II: Pethor's Smiters (Deir ʿAlāa No. 1441)

**Transliteration and Translation:**

(1) ʿzwṭ pthm m[k.]
(2) [wdr]cy wywgg mk[.]

(1) "The mighty ones of Pithom (are) a sm[iter],
(2) [and Edre]ṭi and Yog (are) a smiter."

The Line Drawing:
Introduction

Text II was inscribed upon the top surface of its tablet in a boustrophedon order, as Franken originally noted. This is clear from the fact that the letters face in one direction in one line and in the other direction in the other line. Both lines read from right to left, as the preceding text did, but the lines are upside down in relation to each other. Some of the letters of the text have been broken away at its right end. The written surface of the tablet has been damaged and contains many horizontal cracks. These make the text difficult to read.

Since the script of this tablet especially resembles that of tablet I, it is reasonable to suggest that it was written by the same scribe and at the same time as that tablet. If this was the case, then it is natural to anticipate that the contents of this text may be related to the contents of text I. Tablet I left off with the two attackers who smote Pethor still unidentified. It appears that this text provides those identifications.

Analysis of the Text of Line 1:

The first word of this text begins with a clear-cut case of the vertical half-eye sign of an 'ayin. This is followed by a vertical box with its upper horizontal bar crossing at an angle. Rotating this sign 90° suggests its similarity to the later zayin, with which it should be identified. Next comes a waw, with the forked head that is common to these two texts. The last letter of this word is a taw, written here with its customarily crossed strokes.

Between the waw and taw of this word there is a vertical stroke that would ordinarily be identified as a yod. Here, however, I would suggest a different function for that stroke. The first two letters of 'zw't make up the word 'uz, which is used in Biblical Hebrew either as a noun or as an adjective meaning "strong, mighty, powerful." To this the feminine plural ending -ot has been added, but that ending contains this intrusive yod. Rather than serving as a true yod here, this stroke appears to have been used as a vowel marker for the waw which precedes it, indicating that it should be taken as vocalic a rather than as consonantal w. The waw conjunctions of these texts are not followed by such a marker. I have indicated this proposed function with a v above the line after the waw with which it was used. The identity of the 'uzot or "mighty ones" mentioned here is addressed further below.

The first two signs of the next word were accurately copied by Cazelles from Franken's photograph, and they can be identified with the pe and taw that van den Branden recognized. The pe is more damaged than the
taw. The next letter begins with a vertical stroke, as Cazelles copied. A short horizontal stroke extends to the left from the middle of this stroke as Cazelles also copied. While they are more difficult to see in the photograph, two other horizontal strokes appear to project to the left from the top and bottom of the vertical stroke. There may possibly be another vertical stroke on the left, but this is uncertain. This box-shaped sign matches the form of the he that is found in the fourth word of the preceding inscription. The final sign of this word is located in the left upper corner of the word-box. It has been obscured in part by abrasion to the tablet, but it can still be read. It consists of a large V with a dot between the heads of its limbs. This is the form consistently used by these texts for mem.

On the basis of the foregoing identification of the letters in this word, the word can now be read as pthm. This word occurs as a place name, Pithom (consonantal ptm), in Exod 1:11. It was one of the two major store cities that the Israelites built for Pharaoh in Egypt. These two names, Deir cAlla pthm and biblical ptm, are essentially the same except for the way in which they treat the spirantization of the taw. In Biblical Hebrew this was accomplished by the absence of a dagesh lene. Lacking such an indicator, the Deir cAlla scribe appears to have compensated by following the taw with he. Because of their close written and phonological relationships, the two names can be taken as referring to one and the same place, the significance of whose presence in this text is discussed further below and in Part II of this article.

The last word in this first line is badly damaged and difficult to read. It can be reconstructed, however, from the traces that remain and by parallelism with other parts of this text and with text I. Three dots cross the right upper part of this box in a horizontal line. These remain from the first letter of this word, and the traces of a large V extend down from the outer two of them. This is sufficient evidence upon which to reconstruct another mem here. Only faint traces of the next letter are still present. To anticipate a reading from the next line of this text, we may note that the word in the parallel position there, in the third box, reads more clearly as mk. The same word occurs twice in text I. On the basis of these parallels and the faint traces present, it seems reasonable to reconstruct a kaph here. In its preceding occurrences, mk has been treated as a Hiphil participle from the verb nkh, "to smite," and so it should be treated here too: thus, "a smiter."

**Historical and Geographical Implications of Line 1**

With these three words read and reconstructed, the larger significance of this line can be considered. "Uzot refers to the "mighty," with a plural ending. Pthm is the name of the place Pithom in Egypt. These two words can be taken as related to each other in a
construct chain. The verb "to be" is understood here again, just as it was in the two statements of text I. The last word of this line indicates that the "mighty ones of Pithom" were identified as a "smiter" or attacker. If this text is to be connected with the previous one, as seems reasonable, the place smitten or attacked was Pethor. Thus, one of the two groups that attacked Pethor was some of the "mighty ones" from Pithom in Egypt.

While one might think at first of Pharaoh and his army in this connection, there was a more direct way in which Canaanites could have referred to him in person at the head of his forces. Therefore another, more homogenous, group appears to be in view here. Since the Israelites built Pithom during their stay in Egypt and left it when they exited from Egypt, they make good candidates for this description. The proposal here, then, is that the "mighty ones" from Pithom in Egypt were none other than the Biblical Israelites, and that at some time during their travels in Transjordan they attacked Pethor. The feminine ending on the word for "mighty" is curious. Perhaps it is modeled upon the feminine plural ending that accompanies *saba* (*seba’ot*), "hosts, army, warriors."

Since the name for the other store city built by the Israelites in Egypt was Ramesses (Exod 1:11), the question arises why Pithom was referred to here instead of Ramesses. The availability of the latter name for inclusion here depends upon when this text was written. If it was written before the accession of Ramesses II, ca. 1290, it could not have mentioned the city of Ramesses, because that city was only renamed for him after he came to the throne. This text could still have referred to Pithom earlier than 1300, however, for the name of that city was not coupled chronologically to a particular Pharaoh's name. Although a precise date for these texts has not been established as yet, several of their linguistic and palaeographic features point to a rather lengthy interval between their writing and the ca. 1200 destruction of the temple complex in which they were found.

**Analysis of the Text of Line 2**

Most of the first word in the second line of this text has been broken away. Traces of the vertical half-eye sign identify an ʾayin as the first legible letter after the break. A vertical stroke, possibly a yod, follows this, and there may be a dot between them. There is a longer stroke to the left of the first vertical stroke. Even though it is damaged, it probably should be taken as the line which delimits the end of this word box. It is difficult to
reconstruct a word here on the basis of just two letters. By parallel with the presence of a place name in the first line, a place name might also be expected here. Connecting that expectation with what follows suggests the name of the Bashanite city Edreֵ֑י for restoration here (consonantal ֵדֶ֑י, Num 21:33-35). This proposal is, of course, quite tentative.

The word in the next box begins with a standard form of the waw with a forked head. This should serve as a conjunction to connect this word with the preceding one. The vertical stroke of a yod then follows, and its head has been dotted. Another good example of the waw comes after this yod. A vertical stroke without a dotted head follows this second waw. The difference between the dotted stroke which follows the first waw and the plain stroke which follows the second may be functional. It was suggested above that in the preceding line of this text the vertical stroke which follows the waw of the plural ending on ֵעֶזֶת (עֶזֶת) may have acted as a marker for the vocalic function of the waw which it followed. The same suggestion may be offered here. In this case, the dotted stroke before the second waw should be taken as a consonantal yod, and the stroke after it should be taken as a vocalic indicator for it. A vertical stroke with a head that curves to the right comes next and is readily identifiable as a gimmel. The final letter in this word-box is difficult, but I take it to be another example of the gimmel which has been turned upside down. The rotation of the second letter in a pair can also be seen in the case of mkk in text III.

The word in this box should thus be read as wyw ygg. The first waw has been taken as a conjunction and the second as a vowel letter accompanied by its marker, i.e., w + yogg. Yogg is not analyzed well either as a verb or as a noun, and parallelism with the first line suggests taking it as a personal or place name. While yogg does not correspond to the name of any place known in this region of Transjordan, it does bear a certain resemblance to the personal name of Og. Og was the king of Bashan when the Israelites arrived in Transjordan after the Exodus (Num 21:33). The central portions of these two names, consisting of a vocalic waw followed by a gimmel, correspond directly. The additional gimmel at the end of the inscriptional name is not an important difference, as it may not have been doubled by the biblical writer. Only the initial letters, ֵיֹאָי and ֵוּד, respectively, differ significantly between these two names. This difference is not due to a known phonetic shift. It could have resulted from a scribal error during the course of the transmission of the biblical text. On the other hand, it could also have come about through different ways in which the original scribes heard this man's name, inasmuch as it probably came to them through oral rather than written communication. Since the similarities between these two names still appear to outweigh this one main difference, it is proposed here to identify Deir ֵאָלָ֑ה's (y)og(g) with the biblical (c)og.
The two letters of the word in the next box are partially damaged but still legible. Both of them consist of large V-shaped signs. The point of the first is missing, and the left limb of the second is faint. They both appear to have dots between the heads of their upper limbs. By parallelism with the word used twice in the first text, a stroke rather than a dot can be reconstructed between the limbs of the second sign. That makes the first letter a mem and the second a kaph. Thus we have here another occurrence of the Hiphil participle mk from nkh (referring to a "smiter") that we have already seen three times previously in these texts. A form of the verb "to be" can also be understood here, between the word pair earlier in this line and mk.

*Historical and Geographical Implications of Line 2*

The three words in this line transcribe ['dr]c.y / wyw*gg / mk, and they translate as "[Edre]c.i and Yogg (are) a smiter." This line of text identifies another party that attacked Pethor--Og and his forces from Bashan. Og had two main residences in his territory, one at Ashtaroth and the other at Edre†i (Deut 1:4, Josh 12:4, 13:12). It would have been more logical for him to launch a campaign into the Jordan Valley from the latter (at Der†a), because it was farther south than the former (at Tell †Ashtarah). Thus, if Edre†i is the name that was broken away in part from the beginning of the second line, there would have been good reason to mention it here.

The Song of Heshbon (Num 21:26-30) describes Og's fellow Transjordanian king Sihon as an aggressor who campaigned victoriously into Moabite territory to the south. It would have been natural for Og to act in a similar fashion, but he was not able to campaign very far to the south because by crossing the Jabbok River he would have penetrated into Sihon's territory and come into conflict with him. The best direction for Og to expand his territory was to the west, down to the river in the Jordan Valley. Located just north of the confluence between the Jabbok and the Jordan, Pethor at Tell Deir †Alla probably was one of the last sites that Og conquered in filling out the territory of his kingdom.

The presence of the memory of Sihon's attack upon Moab in the Biblical text suggests that it was a relatively recent occurrence when the Israelites arrived in the area. Mention in this inscription of Og's attack upon Pethor, along with reference to the subsequent Israeliite attack upon the same site, suggests that it too was a relatively recent event by the time the Israelites arrived there.
A question of chronology and textual order arises from the identification of both the Israelites and Bashanites as conquerors of Pethor. Which came first? Num 21:33-35 tells of the Israelite defeat of Og, the conquest of Bashan, and the annihilation of Og's forces and families. Historically, therefore, the Bashanite conquest of Pethor had to occur before the Israelite conquest of the same site, for the Bashanites were not around any longer after the Israelites came through this area. The translation of this text, as given above, presents the Israelites as a smiter of Pethor in the first line and Og and his forces as a smiter in the second line. Because this text was written boustrophedon, however, this order could just as well have been reversed. I have translated the text III this order because it seemed easier to go from one to the other linguistically and epigraphically, and I have also retained it for reasons of literary relations that are described later, in the forthcoming Part II.

(To be continued)
THE INSCRIBED TABLETS FROM TELL DEIR Ĉ ALLA
PART II.

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Part I of this article furnished an introduction to the discovery, context, and general nature of the eleven Deir Ĉ Alla Tablets; gave attention to the matter of decipherment of the script of the three tablets that were inscribed with texts; and discussed in some detail the text of the first two written tablets. This leaves for the present study the discussion of the text of tablet III and the integration of the information obtainable from all three of the inscribed tablets.

Before proceeding further, however, we first repeat here the transliteration and translation of tablet I as a basis for relations with the other two texts that follow. The transcription and linguistic comments given on the text of tablet I stand as they were presented in Part I of this article. Also, a new "Table of the Letters of the Script of Deir Ĉ Allā" appears on the next page, updating the listing given in Part I.

Text I: Pethor Smitten
(Deir Ĉ Alla No. 1449)

Transliteration and Translation

\( lkm / mk. / wtm.y / whm / mk. / ptr \)
(1a) "To you (have come) a smiter and a finisher,
(1b) and they (are) the smiters of Pethor."

Text II was also transliterated and translated in Part I of this article. It is the most difficult of the three written tablets from Deir

*Editor's Note: Part I of this article appeared in AUSS 27 (1989): 21-37. Part II continues the sequential numbering of footnotes and sections given in that earlier portion of the study. The figure depicting the script of Deir Ĉ Allā is, however, renumbered as "I" inasmuch as it represents simply a revision of Figure I in Part I.
Figure 1. Revised Table of Letters of the Script of Deir 'Alla

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Text I</th>
<th>Text II</th>
<th>Text III</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'Aleph</td>
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</tbody>
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[Image of the table with symbols and characters]
DEIR ĀLĀ TAblets 99

'Ālla to work with because it has suffered the most damage, having many cracks on its written surface. These cracks confuse the identification of the letters that were originally written because, in some instances, they appear to provide additional strokes with those letters. Since Part I of this article was finished, further progress has been made in distinguishing the original letters from extraneous marks due to damage.

While much of the epigraphic and linguistic discussion of this text given previously still applies, some corrections need to be made to it. The results of these improved readings have been incorporated into the transliteration and translation of text II presented here. These new readings also affect, the historical application of this text. As a basis for this new treatment of text II, a new and more accurate line drawing of it is provided here.

5. Text II: Pethor's Smiters
(Deir 'Ālla No. 1441)

Transliteration and Translation

(1) ʿsr / wywbbq / mk
(2) ʿzwʾt /ptʾ.m / mk

(1) "There was a damming up and the Jabbok (became) a smiter.
(2) Mighty (shocks) suddenly (became) a smiter."

The Line Drawing:

Introduction

Since text II was written in boustrophedon order, it is difficult to determine which of its two lines should be read first. The order of the lines in this text have been reversed here in comparison to
my previous treatment of them. The reasons for this are developed after text III has been translated and interpreted.

Analysis of the Text
of Line 1

The first word of the first line begins with a clear occurrence of a half-moon shaped 'ayin. A yod was previously read following this 'ayin. This yod should be rejected now. There is a vertical stroke here, but further examination of the photographs indicates that a triangular wedge-shaped stroke extends to the right from its mid-shaft. In addition, a horizontal stroke of short length was incised across the top of the vertical stroke. This form resembles that of the dog-legged-shape sade in other early alphabets, and as utilized here that letter contributes to the identification of an intelligible word.

Further examination of the photographs also indicates that a circular letter was incised above the head of the sade. This circle is faint in the published photograph, but a copy of that photograph with its lines darkened brings this circle out more clearly. This circle is rather flat across the bottom, it is pointed in its right lower quadrant, and it contains a t-shaped incision angling down towards the left within its circle. All of this gives this sign a head-shaped appearance, which identifies it as a res. This res is comparable to those that have been identified in text III below.

In conjunction with the previously recognized 'ayin, these two new letters make up the word 'sr. In Hebrew this verb means "to restrain, retain, shut up, stop." It may function here either as a Qal perfect or a participle. Its subject should be taken as an indefinite third person, for the next word is separated off from it by a waw which serves as a conjunction. The word that is connected in this way is the name of a river (see below). Since a river is restrained, retained, or shut up when it is dammed up, such a damming up appears, therefore, to be that to which reference is made here.

This type of event is known to have happened in this region when the Jordan River was temporarily dammed up by earthquakes that knocked in its west bank near Damieh, biblical Adam, in 1267, 1546, 1906, and 1927 A.D. If a damming up of the Jordan was located below its confluence with the Jabbok, then such an obstruction would naturally have had a similar effect upon the Jabbok River too.

The first three letters which follow the word divider have been read correctly previously as w-y-w. This combination may be taken as a conjunction followed by a consonantal yod and a vocalic waw. Thus this word begins with w + yo-. Two vertical strokes were written following the second waw. The first one curves downwards to the right and the second one curves upwards to the right, but they both look like the same letter, which has simply been oriented differently in the two positions. At one
time these two letters were read as *gimmels*, but the *gimmel* in text III has a head that makes a $100^\circ$ bend to the right, whereas these two letters angle only slightly at their upper and lower ends. This suggests that these letters differ from that *gimmel*. If the curved ends of these letters were expanded into triangular heads, as has been done with dots for the *beth* in *btym* of text III, these letters could easily be read as *beths*. My suggestion is that the scribe of this text, working with a somewhat different orthography than the scribe of text III, wrote these two *beths* here with this form.

At first glance, the last letter in this word-box looks like a trefoil sign pointing upwards. This was previously identified as a *kaph*, but closer inspection reveals that the part of the stroke that extends upwards to the right also curves around and bends back towards the left upstroke. That makes this letter one which consists of a quasi-circular head with a short tail extending to the left. There are four main letters with closed heads and tails in the early alphabets: *beth*, *dalet*, *qoph*, and *res*. *Beth*, *dalet*, and *res* have been identified elsewhere in these texts and this letter does not look like them; therefore, by a process of elimination this letter should be identified as a *qoph*, its first occurrence in these texts.

From these letter identifications the word written after the conjunction in this word-box can be identified as *ywbbq*. This corresponds rather directly with the way in which the name of the Jabbok River was written in the biblical text, with only two minor variations. In the MT the *beth* of this name was doubled with a *dagesh*, but here it appears to have been doubled by writing out the two letters. This was an irregular practice not continued in later inscriptions. Given the early date of the alphabetic writing of these tablets, however, experimental irregularities like this are only to be expected. The second variation is that this word was written with an *o*-vowel in first position while the Massoretes pointed it with an *a*-vowel. Since this text is two millennia older than the Massoretic pointing, however, the *o*-vowel should be taken as more original.

The final word of this line, *mk*, refers to a "smiter," and should be identified linguistically as it was in Part I. The proper name which precedes it identifies that "smiter," i.e., the Jabbok River after it was dammed up and overflowed this area. Text I mentions, but does not identify, "smiters" of the region. Text II reveals that the river which overflowed after it was dammed up was one of these smiters.

*Analysis of the Text of Line 2*

The first word of the second line remains the same linguistically, *`zw`yt*. This is the word for "strong, mighty," with a feminine plural ending. Previously I interpreted this word as referring to human forces or, more specifically, Israelite troops that came from Pithom in Egypt at the time of the Exodus. Since the next word can no longer be read as Pithom,
however, this interpretation must be abandoned. My new reading of the
next word now indicates that these "mighty" ones, whatever they were,
came upon Pethor "suddenly." Text III, discussed below, indicates that
when these mighty ones came upon Pethor so suddenly, they caused the
collapse of houses there. Since human attackers could be fended off for a
time at least, they do not fit this description very well. The suddenness of
the disaster and its effects suggest rather that the mighty ones that affected
the town in this way were shock waves of an earthquake. Given the
location of this site in the earthquake-prone area of the Jordan Valley and
given also the archaeological evidence for earthquakes found in the ex-
cavations, such an occurrence here seems quite reasonable.

Three of the four letters in the next word stand as they were read
previously. The problematic letter is the third one. The clear portion of
this letter consists of a vertical stroke with a triangular wedge extending to
the left from its mid-shaft. In Part I of this article two horizontal strokes
extending to the left were also read as connected to the superior and
inferior poles of the vertical stroke of this letter. These additional horizon-
tal strokes should now be discarded as not connected with this letter for
they appear to be cracks in the tablet due to damage.

An epigraphic indicator for this revision comes from the mem
incised
above and to the left of this letter. If a horizontal stroke extended to the left
from the superior pole of this vertical stroke, the right-hand downstroke of
the mem would have crossed it. This is unlikely, for this crossing could
easily have been avoided and does not occur anywhere else in the three
tablets. Thus the faint line here is more likely a crack due to damage and
should not be taken as a part of the letter. The same can be said for the
crack extending to the left from the inferior pole of the vertical stroke.

Without these horizontal strokes, this letter cannot be a he or heth. It
still remains, however, to establish the real identity of this letter. If its
horizontal wedge were extended across the vertical stroke, and the superior
and inferior margins of that wedge were separated, it would resemble the
form of the ‘aleph in other early alphabets. In view of that resemblance
this letter should be taken as an ‘aleph here, the first occurrence of the
‘aleph to be recognized in these texts. The third word in this line can be
read as pt’m, "sudden, suddenly." Whatever occurred by means of the
actions of the "mighty ones" should have taken place "suddenly." This
suddenness strongly suggests that the "mighty ones" are to be identified as
the shock waves of an earthquake. The description of the disaster which
follows in text III fits well with a disaster of this nature.

The word, mk, which means "smiter," stands at the end of this line as
it was previously read. Thus these strong shocks which suddenly struck
Pethor constituted the second of the two smiters mentioned in text I, the
"finisher" referred to there. The reason for this ordering of the statements
in text II is discussed further below.
The revisions I have proposed for the statements in text II might be summarized here as a complement to my previous study of this text. Six letters have now been identified more accurately: the sade and res in the first word of what is now the first line, two beths and a goph in the second word of that line, and an 'aleph in the second word of the second line. In addition, these two lines have been reversed in order from the way in which they were presented previously.

The revisions now set forth provide a transliteration and translation indicating that the smiters which struck Pethor were not human forces like the troops of Israel or King Og of Bashan. Rather, they were the forces of nature that were unleashed against this site, first by the nearby river and subsequently by an earthquake. These were the two "smiters" of text I, the first identified there as a "smiter" and the second as a "finisher."

6. Text III: Pethor's State
(Deir 'Alla No. 1440)

Transliteration and Translation

(1) mkk / btym / dry / ccym
(2) wcyn / ngr / mksmy / wysym
(3) z'm

(1) "The houses have fallen in heaps of ruins,
(2) and the spring has poured out covering them,
(3) and a curse has been placed."

The Line Drawing:
Introduction

This final written tablet is in mint condition. Its writing is very clear. The third line consists of one word written along the bottom edge of the tablet. Line 1 is the bottom line on the face of the tablet, and line 2 is the top line on the face of the tablet. The reason for following this order rather than the reverse is syntactical. The bottom line begins without a waw, whereas the two statements in the top line both begin with a waw. These waws should serve as conjunctions to join their statements to those that have gone previously. It seems likely, therefore, that this tablet was meant to be read from bottom to top rather than the reverse.

Analysis of the Text
of Line 1 (Bottom Line)

The first word of the bottom line begins with a broad v-shaped mem and two trefoil-headed kaphs. These two kaphs have tails, whereas the kapn in the top line of this text does not, an irregularity in this scribe's writing. The second kaph is rotated 90° in comparison to the first, another irregularity in this text, but there are parallels to this type of irregularity in text II. In spite of this rotation, both of these letters are readily recognizable as kaphs. The Hebrew word mkk means "to fall down, sink down, settle in." It is used in Eccl 10:18 to refer to houses that fall into ruins due to neglect. But the houses here were hit suddenly according to the second text, so their collapse into ruins must have been more abrupt than in the biblical case.

The subject of this verb follows as the second word in this line, and it is the plural noun btym, "houses." The beth consists of a three-point triangular head atop a vertical unbent tail. The taw is standard in form for this text. The yod has a dotted head. The yod is used four other times in this text, and the mem of the plural ending is only one of five examples of that letter in this text. An interesting feature of the btym here is the presence of the yod, representing the i-vowel of the plural ending -im.

The third word of this line begins with a dotted triangular head that has no tail. This is similar to the dalet of the later scripts, with which it should be identified. The second letter is taken as representing another occurrence of the head-shaped res. It can be compared to the res with which ngr ends in the top line, even though slightly different in shape. The most common use of dr or dor in Biblical Hebrew is as a reference to a "generation." This idea is derived from the root idea of a "cycle" or "circuit." As a verb, dor means "to pile up," and the noun "dwelling place" is also derived from this root. Anyone of the foregoing meanings could make sense here, but the idea of a "circle" or "heap, pile," of ruins fits best. The final letter of this word is a yod, which serves as an indicator
for a construct relationship of a masculine plural noun. This word should thus be taken as in a construct or genitival relationship with the word that follows it. It is striking to see the yod of this relationship written out here, in contrast to the practice of scribes who wrote later inscriptions.

The final word of this line begins with two vertical half-moon shaped cayins. These are followed by another yod and another mem. This form corresponds well to the biblical word for "ruins" in the masculine plural. In Biblical Hebrew this word was written with one cayin and two yods, while here it was written with two cayins and one yod. Presumably, these cayins were intended to be read or pronounced with i-vowels, and the yod here represents the i-vowel of the plural ending.

**Analysis of the Text of**

**Line 2 (Top Line)**

The first word of the top line begins with what is, for this text, a normally shaped waw with a semicircular head. This should serve as a conjunction connecting the second thought in the text with the first thought written in the line below. The waw is followed by the vertical half-eye cayin. Next come the dotted vertical stroke of the yod and the wavy vertical line of the nun. Thus we have here the word cyn. In Biblical Hebrew this word can mean either an "eye" or a "spring." The latter meaning makes better sense in the context here, especially in conjunction with the verbs that follow it.

The nun which begins the second word is virtually identical to the nun with which the first word ends. This is followed by a gimmel with a curved head, and then a head-shaped res. The Hebrew word ngr means "to flow, pour, gush forth." In 2 Sam 14:14 it is used of water being poured out, and it is used for wine in Ps 75:9. As a feminine singular perfect (or participle) in the Niphal, it probably was pronounced with a final a-vowel, but that vowel was not written out here.

The broad v-shaped sign of the mem occurs twice in the next word, and its first occurrence is followed by standard forms of the kaph and samek. The word ends with the vertical stroke topped by a dot to make it a yod. The kaph-samek combination at the heart of this word provides the root ksh, which in Biblical Hebrew commonly means "to cover." With a mem preformative, this form looks like a participle in the Piel, the conjugation in which this root commonly occurs. The second mem of this word should be taken as a masculine plural pronominal suffix inasmuch as a plural ending on the participle would not fit with the gender or number of either the preceding subject or verb. The antecedent of this plural pronominal suffix would most logically be the "ruins" of the "houses" mentioned in the preceding line.

The yod written after the pronominal suffix may represent an old case ending. An archaic survival of a similar old case ending appears with the
same suffix on the same verb in the old poem of Exod 15 (v. 5; cf. v. 7). There this verb was used for the action of the waters that covered the chariots of Pharaoh and his men. Here it was used for a similar action of a covering by waters, but in this case it was waters from a spring that covered ruins of the houses of a town. Evidently the earthquake which struck this area and toppled houses also fractured the water table that supplied the spring of the town, thus causing it to pour forth in abundance.

The initial letter of the next word is a waw, which should be taken as a conjunction. This is followed by a word containing two yods and ending with a mem. The vertical strokes of the yods are undotted. Between them is a vertical bow-shaped sign of the sin/sin, which Cairus distinguished from the nun. In Biblical Hebrew ysym parses readily as a third person masculine singular Qal imperfect of sym, "to put, set, place." It is interesting to note that the central yod of this middle weak verb is written out here.

This verb cannot stand alone. It needs something to go with it--a subject, an object, or more. The search for such a complement leads to the word on the edge of the tablet, its third line. Presumably this word was written there because there was not enough space left on the second line of the text written on the face of the tablet. According to Franken's study of the scribal methods employed in writing this text, this was the last word written on the tablet. It should, therefore, complete the statement that began with ysym.

The word written along the edge of the tablet was zcm. The cayin and the mem have been seen previously in the body of the text. The sign that precedes them is a vertical box-shaped letter with a number of crossbars. This looks most like a heth, but that letter does not fit well here preceding an cayin. Cairus has suggested that this sign should be identified as a zayin. In favor of that identification is the fact that some of the crossbars incline downwards at an angle to the left, as does the crossbar of the later zayin.

In Biblical Hebrew zcm means "to curse." This word appears, for example, in a speech made by Balaam of Pethor in which he described Balak's instructions to him (Num 23:7). Thus it seems quite appropriate to find the same word in this text from Balaam's home town. As a noun, this word on the side of the tablet serves well as the subject of the verb at the end of the second (upper) line on the face of the tablet. The whole phrase wysym zcm thus translates, "and a curse has been placed." Either the scribe who wrote this text saw the events that had taken place as the result of a curse, or a curse was placed upon the site after it was affected in this way.

Summary of Text III
The falling down of houses referred to in the first line of this text is interpreted here as being caused by an earthquake, presumably the same earthquake mentioned at the end of text II. Knocking
down the houses was the first destructive action of this quake, hence it was mentioned first on the tablet. The quake also fractured the water table of the spring at the site causing it to overflow upon the ruins of the fallen houses. This was the "covering" of "them," i.e., the ruined houses mentioned in the second line of this text. The final line of this text refers to the curse, either that from which these effects resulted, or that which was pronounced upon the site after its destruction.

7. The Language of the Texts

With the script of these texts deciphered and their contents translated, the language of the texts can now be analyzed in some detail. Even though we have only three short texts with which to deal, they provide a surprisingly large amount of linguistic data, some of it quite extraordinary for texts from so early a date.

Six verbs occur in these three texts-two in tablet I (Nkh and Tmm), and one of these (Nkh) is used over again in tablet II. Tablet III adds four more verbs (Mkk, Ngr, Ksh and Sym). Perfects and participles occur, but only one example of an imperfect (Ysym) and no infinitives or imperatives appear to be present. Four different conjugations are represented: the Qal, Piel, Niphal, and Hiphil. All of these roots and forms are readily recognizable from Biblical Hebrew.

Five nouns are present in these texts-the words for "curse," "strong (ones)," "houses," "heaps," and "ruins." The first of these is in the singular, the rest are in the plural. One of the plurals is feminine, and the others are masculine. One of the masculine plural nouns appears in a construct form. There are no recognizable occurrences of the article with the nouns in these texts, a fact consistent with the early date of writing. All five of these nouns are well known in the vocabulary of Biblical Hebrew. Two toponyms occur, the place name of Pethor in text I and the river name of the Jabbok in text II.

Three pronouns occur in these texts, two of them independent and one of them suffixed. The second person and third person plural are represented. The pronouns correspond in form with the forms used for similar functions in Biblical Hebrew. The Waw used as a conjunction appears in all three of the texts--twice in text I, once in text II, and twice in text III.

One of the more remarkable linguistic features of these texts is that they appear to be vocalized in part. The main letter or sign
that was used for this function was the vertical stroke of the yod, either dotted or undotted. This appears to have represented mainly the i-vowel, but in one case of a masculine plural noun in construct it may stand for e. The most obvious vocalic use of the yod is in the plural masculine ending on nouns, -ym or -im, which occurs with three words in text III. In one instance--ysym of text III--the second yod appears to represent the middle weak radical of the verbal root. In one instance, in mksmy of text III, the yod following the pronominal suffix may represent an old case ending that may be compared with the related archaic forms in the Song of the Sea (Exod 15:5, 7).

In two instances in text II the waw appears to have been used to represent o-vowels. The more obvious case of this is with the feminine plural ending -ot. There it is accompanied by an undotted vertical stroke. This appears to be an indicator for the use of a vowel letter rather than representing a vowel or consonant itself. The other use of the waw as a vowel letter appears in the name of the Jabbok River. No cases have been recognized in these texts in which representation of an a-vowel or u-vowel was attempted.

The conclusion from these linguistic data is that either these tablets were written by Hebrews, or they were written in a Transjordanian dialect of Canaanite that was very close to Biblical Hebrew. These two possibilities are examined further, following a discussion of the potential historical connections of these tablets.

8. Historical Geography

The major contribution which the Deir cAlla Tablets make to historical geography is to locate Pethor of Num 22:5 at Tell Deir cAlla. The reading of this name on tablet I is reasonably clear and direct. Locating this text as part of a series of tablets that were found at that site makes it more likely that this text was written there rather than brought from elsewhere.

In another direction, this discovery provides an explanation for another major find at the same site, the eighth-century-B.C. plaster texts from the walls of a later building. These texts, written in red and black ink on the plaster walls, were discovered in 1967.15

and they were published in 1976. They were found in a very fragmentary condition, and much scholarly ingenuity has gone into their reconstruction and study.

The central character in combination I, a narrative dramatic text, is Balaam the son of Beor. His name and patronym appear in broken or complete form in at least four places in the first six lines of this text. His title is given with his name in the first instance—i.e., "the man who was a seer of the gods." There can be no mistaking that the individual named and described here is the same person as the Balaam whose actions are set forth in Num 22-24.

The rest of combination I relates Balaam's experience. The gods revealed themselves to him in a night dream or vision, and informed him about a coming disaster involving both a "fire of chastisement" and a convulsion of nature. Combination II is even more fragmentary and the nature of its contents is obscure.

A. Lemaire has asked the question, "Why were these literary, probably religious, texts copied on the plaster wall of a room at Deir ‘Alla?’" His answer is that there probably was a sanctuary nearby. This appears to be correct, but is only part of the answer. Now, thanks to the Deir ‘Alla Tablets, we can recognize that this locale was where Balaam’s home sanctuary of Pethor was located. Of all the places in the entire Near East where his memory might have been preserved, this location is obviously the most likely because of its being the very spot where he lived and exercised his

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16 See the entire report of Hoftijzer and van der Kooij mentioned in the preceding note.


prophetic ministry. How appropriate, then, that a narrative text from him or about him should have been preserved at this site.

The identification of Tell Deir ʿAlla with Pethor also aids in clarifying a problem in biblical geography. In Num 23:7 Balaam introduces his first oracle of blessing upon Israel with the remark that "from Aram Balak brought me, the king of Moab from the eastern mountains." This statement is commonly assumed to be a reference to northeastern Syria or Mesopotamia. Support for such an impression has been found from a remark in Num 22:5, which says that Balak called Balaam from "the river." Since the unmodified term "the river" is commonly used in the Bible to refer to the Euphrates River, this reference in Num 22:5 has been considered as referring to that river valley and that Balaam was called from that region.

In light of the new information available from the Deir ʿAlla tablets, however, the foregoing proposal deserves reexamination. Both "the river" and "eastern mountains" (Num 23:7) could fit just as well for Pethor at Tell Deir ʿAlla. In this case, the river would be the Jordan River and the eastern mountains would be those of the eastern Jordan Valley leading up to the plateau.

The major obstacle to making such an identification is the reference to Aram, which should be Syria to the north, not Canaan to the south. A rather direct solution to this problem lies in positing a very small and simple, but significant, scribal error in the transmission of the biblical text. Two out of three of the letters in the names of Adam and Aram are the same. They differ only in the *dalet* and *res*. These two letters were written in a very similar fashion in the pre-exilic Hebrew script. *Dalet* had a large triangular head and a short vertical tail, while *res* had a smaller triangular head but a longer vertical tail. In Iron-Age Hebrew, Phoenician, and Aramaic inscriptions these two letters are commonly very difficult to distinguish.

My proposal for resolving this problem is that while the original author wrote "Adam," a scribe later in the course of textual transmission miscopied it as "Aram," either through misunderstanding the reference or through an inability to distinguish the correct letter in an earlier manuscript. The scribe who copied Deut 23:4 went even further to gloss in "Naharaim," i.e., "of the two rivers," to go along with the already miscopied "Aram." In this
way Pethor came to be located in Mesopotamia when in actuality it was located near Adam by the Jordan River and by the mountains of the eastern Jordan Valley.

Balaam could be called from both Adam and Pethor, according to the text, because Adam was the residential town in the area and Pethor was the specific site of the sanctuary there, where Balaam carried out his prophetic ministry. Excavations at the latter site have demonstrated its religio-sanctuary nature.

9. History

Interconnections between the Tablets
Before potential relations between these texts and external sources can be explored, their own internal relations need to be established as firmly as possible. The translations developed above indicate an interconnection of all three texts in that they all dealt with the same theme, a disaster of natural origin which overcame Pethor.

Within that framework these texts can be set in order quite readily. Text I provides a general introductory statement about the disaster, text II identifies the factors or "smiters" which brought about this destruction, and text III concludes the series with a brief description of the state of the site after these "smiters" struck. The lexical and thematic relations among the three texts have established this as the proper order, and it would be difficult to alter it.

Tablet II has been the most difficult to read, translate, and understand. It is also the one most difficult in regard to determining the internal order of its own statements. Because it was written in boustrophedon order, the tablet can be turned in one way and read in that order, or it can be turned upside down and read in the alternate order. The question here is, Which should come first, the line with the flood or the line with the earthquake? The tablet itself does not appear to give a clear-cut indication of which direction of reading was intended, so one must go to its connections with the other tablets to establish the order of its statements.

While one might suspect that the earthquake of tablet II should have preceded and caused the river flooding mentioned in this text, that order cannot be established directly from the text. Text I refers to two "smiters," an initial "smiter" and a "finisher." Tablet II
identifies two "smiters," each connected with that specific word in the singular. It is logical, therefore, to take the two smiters identified in tablet II as the two smiters mentioned by tablet I. Thus the flood and earthquake of tablet II should be taken as separate and distinct "smiters," they were not seen as two phases of the same event. In other words, the earthquake was not mentioned here as an indication as to why the river flooded, but was mentioned to point out that it too was a smiter of Pethor.

The question of sequence remains, therefore, and it still needs to be determined whether the flood was the initial smiter and the earthquake the finisher or vice versa. Tablet III appears to provide the best answer to this question by describing the final events at the site. Its description of the final destruction there is one of an earthquake, not a river flood. This was the occasion upon which the houses fell in ruins and the spring at the site poured out over these ruins. The finality of this sequence of events is emphasized in tablet III by the mention of the curse at the end of this tablet's recital. Regardless of whether this curse was a reflection back upon the course of these destructive events or an active imprecation at their conclusion, this act of cursing surely was the last event in the sequence narrated by all three of the tablets.

Applying this information to the question with which we are dealing indicates that the earthquake was the "finisher" as a smiter, and therefore the flood of the river should be taken as the initial smiter of the two. Thus the first tablet mentions the two smiters of Pethor, the second tablet identifies them by their nature, and the third tablet sets them in order by indicating which of them finished the site off. It also describes the state of the site after that finisher got through with it.

The conclusion here, then, is that the first statement on the second tablet should be identified as the one that deals with the flooding by the Jabbok and that its second statement should be taken as the reference to the mighty shock waves which struck suddenly. Thus tablet II does not say that the river was dammed up as a result of an earthquake, nor does it say that it was not dammed up by an earthquake. It simply does not address that point. If it was dammed up by an earthquake--something which one might suspect on other grounds--then that shock wave was an earlier one of less intensity than the final one that finished off the destruction of the site.
By way of conclusion to this point, these tablets may now be translated together and in order:

Text I  To you have come a smiter and a finisher, and they are the smiters of Pethor.

Text II  There was a damming up and the Jabbok became a smiter. Strong and sudden (shocks) became a smiter.

Text III  The houses fell in heaps of ruins, and the spring poured out covering them, and a curse was placed.

A Potential Connection to Biblical History

In Part I of this article a connection with biblical history was proposed, mainly on the basis of a misreading of two words in the difficult text of tablet II. It is now evident from improved readings for the letters in these words that the biblical connection proposed--with the Israelite conquest of Transjordan--cannot be sustained. That conclusion does not mean, however, that no potential connection between these tablets and the Bible is available. It simply means that to address that issue one must look elsewhere to determine whether such a connection is possible or not.

The nature of the events described by these tablets leads rather directly to another series of events described in the Bible. This series, recorded in the book of Joshua, begins with the crossing of the Jordan River by the Israelites and ends with their conquest of Jericho. Jericho was in the southern Jordan Valley and Pethor in the mid-Jordan Valley, both of them thus being located near the geological fault that runs north and south through that valley. It is natural, therefore, to expect that they would also share somewhat similar fates whenever earthquakes struck the region. If the epicenter of such an earthquake was near enough to Jericho to knock down its thick and heavily supported and defended walls, it could easily have had sufficient force to knock down the thinner walls of houses at Tell Deir ʿAlla in the mid-Jordan Valley.

Josh 6:20 describes the way in which the Israelites gained entrance into the city of Jericho. The walls of the city fell down on that occasion. Even though the Hebrew text does not use the specific word for earthquake here, the net effect of what is described can be referred to as an earthquake. Regardless of whether this was naturally or supernaturally induced, some sort of quaking of the
earth is the best mechanism through which to understand how these walls fell. And this quake must have been one of considerable magnitude in order to accomplish the extent of the destruction at Jericho. As such, it should also have had sufficient force to damage Pethor farther north in the Jordan Valley. This would fit well with the quake mentioned in the second line of the second Deir cAlla tablet, the effects of which are more fully described in tablet III.

Another event took place near Jericho prior to that final destruction, however, and it too could be expected to have had direct effects upon the region of the mid-Jordan Valley. Josh 3:13 specifically states that this particular region was affected by a damming up of the Jordan River at the time the Israelites crossed over the river from their camp at Shittim. The waters of the Jordan were cut off at ancient Adam, modern Damiyeh, in order to make it possible for the Israelites to cross over. The biblical text conveys the Israelite's viewpoint and participation in these events. Their interest was in being able to cross over the river, something they normally would not have been able to do at this time. But we must also take into account the view of the Canaanites who lived on the other side of this blockage, north and east of Adam. It is reasonable to assume that conditions were not very congenial for them at that time in that they most likely experienced a considerable amount of flooding in their settlements. That is what text II says happened at Pethor.

The river most important to the Israelites in their quest to cross from one side of the valley to the other was the Jordan, hence that is the river referred to in their description of these events. As the river nearest to Pethor at Tell Deir cAlla, on the other hand, the Jabbok was of more concern to the residents there. Any damming up of the Jordan should have affected the Jabbok in a similar way, so long as the blockage was located south of the point of their confluence. Text II does not specifically state that the Jabbok was the only river dammed up at this time. It simply says that there was a damming up and that the Jabbok became a smiter of Pethor as a result. The actual point of the blockage could just as easily have been on the Jordan, and the course of events in more recent occurrences of this type suggests that it probably was so in this case too.

The relations proposed above can now be outlined by citing from both sources in parallel:
Deir 'Alla Tablets

I. To you have come a smiter and a finisher, and they are the smitters of Pethor.
II. There was a damming up and the Jabbok struck, (then) strong and sudden (shocks) struck.
III. The houses fell in heaps of ruins, the spring poured forth covering-them, and a curse was placed.

Chronology

It should be noted here that the biblical text puts a minimum of two weeks, and probably more time than that, between the crossing of the Jordan in Josh 3:13 and the conquest of Jericho in 6:20. These brief statements on these tablets do not address that issue directly, they only indicate that the events occurred in succession without indicating how long an interval elapsed between them.

Another aspect of the chronology involved here is the question of how long a period elapsed from the time these tablets were written when Jericho and Pethor were destroyed to the time the tablets were sealed in the later destruction of the sanctuary at Pethor. Two main dates have been proposed for the conquest of Jericho by those who hold a historical view of the events narrated in the book of Joshua. One view dates this conquest to the end of Late Bronze Age I, ca. 1400 B.C., while the other dates it to the end of Late Bronze Age II ca. 1230 B.C. My personal preference favors the Late Bronze Age I date,19 but the difference between these two dates is not a major consideration here. The date selected simply

19 A date of 971 B.C. for the accession of Solomon, as established by E. R. Thiele in *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1965), p. 55, by fixing Solomon's death in 931 B.C., dates the commencement of the construction of the temple to Solomon's fourth year, 967. 1 Kgs 6:1 extends 480 years back to the time of the Exodus, and 40 years should be subtracted from this figure to allow for the wandering in the wilderness. These figures date the conquest under Joshua to late in the fifteenth century B.C. Judg 11:26 supports such a date by indicating that the conquest took place some 300 years before the time of Jephthah. If Jephthah is dated to about 1100 B.C., the conquest would be dated to approximately 1400 B.C., or essentially the same time that 1 Kgs 6:1 would date it.
determines the length of time these tablets would have been preserved in the sanctuary at Deir ʿAlla. If the earlier date is correct, then those tablets would have been preserved there for approximately two centuries. For a thirteenth-century conquest date, the tablets would have been preserved there less than a century.

A distinction between earthquakes is important here. From his excavations at the site, Franken determined that the Late Bronze Age II sanctuary was destroyed by an earthquake.\textsuperscript{20} The inscribed tablets were found in this destruction level. Obviously, the earthquake referred to by the tablets could not be the earthquake that caused the destruction in which they were sealed, or they would have had to be written and stored in the sanctuary simultaneously with that earthquake. The earthquake to which the tablets refer must therefore be one which hit this site sometime earlier in the Late Bronze Age.

**Specificity**

With these tablets pointing to an earthquake antedating the one which finally destroyed the site, the question arises as to how specific one can be in connecting that first earthquake and surrounding events with those that are mentioned in the Bible in connection with the fall of Jericho. Since there were other earthquakes in this area at this and other times, perhaps these tablets refer to an earthquake and related events other than those which took place in the time of Joshua.

The reference to the damming up of the river makes the course of events much more unique and specific, however. While there have been many earthquakes in the Jordan Valley throughout history, only a few of them have been of sufficient strength or

proximity to dam up the Jordan River near Adam/Damiyeh. In recorded historical times this has only happened on four occasions since the thirteenth century A.D. It also occurred in the time of Joshua, according to Josh 3:13, and now these tablets give us a reference to such an occurrence prior to the end of the Late Bronze Age, i.e. in the same era in which Joshua lived and fought. That connection brings these two sources close together in time.

It should also be stressed that these tablets take our knowledge of this kind of phenomenon two millennia farther back in time than was previously the case from extra-biblical sources. From the damming up of the Jordan by the earthquake of 1267 A.D. these tablets take our knowledge of this kind of occurrence all the way back to the Late Bronze Age. It appears that an event of this sort-or in any case our knowledge of such events-is a rarity.

There is the matter, as well, of the distinctive nature of the sequence of the events recited by these tablets, as translated and interpreted above. The earthquake which caused the destruction of the site was not the shock wave that caused the damming up of the river, if it was dammed up by an earthquake at all. Tablet I separates those two events, and tablet III indicates that the more destructive quake came later. So we have here a damming up of the river first, and then of the more destructive quake that damaged the site so badly. This unique order of events is all the more unlikely at other times, but it just happens to fit precisely the order of events in the biblical record.

Thus there are four major factors which point to a connection between the events narrated by these tablets and those described in Joshua. First, the damming up of the river along with an earthquake emphasizes the rarity of the events described by the tablets. Second, the archaeology of the site places the events of these tablets prior to the end of the Late Bronze Age, the same age in which Joshua was active. Third, the contrast with later historical records adds further emphasis to the rarity of these events. And fourth, the sequence of the events described in these tablets is the same as the sequence in the book of Joshua, a factor making them even less likely to have been replicated at some other time. The conclusion here, then, is that there is sufficient specificity in the narration of the events in these texts to connect them with those described in Joshua.
Authorship

A final question remains: Who was at the site of Deir ʿAlla when the tablets were written? There are two possibilities, and they have already been raised at the end of the discussion of the linguistic data from the tablets. Either these tablets were written in Hebrew by Israelites or they were written by some non-Hebrew residents of Transjordan who spoke and wrote a dialect of Canaanite that was very close in form and content to Biblical Hebrew. Historical contexts can be suggested for either of these possibilities.

An Israelite authorship could be posited from the following circumstances: The portion of Transjordan settled by the Israelite tribes was conquered and distributed before Joshua led all Israel across the Jordan River (Num 32). Pethor at Deir ʿAlla could have been part of this conquest and temporary settlement. The Transjordanian tribes promised Moses, however, that they would not permanently settle upon the lands distributed to them until the Cis-Jordan tribes had inherited their lands too (Num 32:18-20). In fact, they were supposed to cross the Jordan and accompany the Cis-Jordan tribes in the latter's battles of conquest. They might very well, however, have left a small garrison behind at this strategic site, and one of the soldiers stationed there might have written up this account after the fall of Jericho.

A non-Israelite authorship can be suggested from another set of circumstances: This place was Balaam's headquarters, and he may not only have composed his prophetic oracles in poetry (Num 22-24) but may also have written them down. We cannot attribute the writing of these tablets to Balaam himself, however, for he was killed before the Israelites crossed the Jordan (Num 31:8); but the nature of the Deir ʿAlla site as a religious center would imply the existence there of other literate persons or prophets. Most likely there was something resembling a non-Israelite school of the prophets, the staff of which included Balaam for a time; and someone among the other literate persons could have been responsible for the writing of these tablets.

Even though no final conclusion has been reached in this matter of authorship, it still is evident that the texts were written in Hebrew or in a dialect very close to Hebrew: As translated and interpreted above, they also indicate that their writer had a knowledge of events in the mid-Jordan Valley contemporary with the
Israelite crossing of the Jordan River and the conquest of Jericho under Joshua. They simply reflect a perspective of someone located elsewhere in the valley concerning the way in which the people there were directly affected by those same events.

I had originally intended to discuss in this second installment of my article the dotted, unwritten tablets, as mentioned in Part I. But the study of these tablets is still in a very preliminary state, and therefore my comments on them will be reserved for another occasion.

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THE EXPERIENCE OF BALAAM AS SYMBOLIC OF
THE ORIGINS OF PROPHECY

George Adam Smith

THE story of Balaam has engaged the genius and been illuminated by the expository powers of some of the greatest preachers of Christianity; conspicuous among whom (as we all know) are Bishop Butler with his sermon on the Character of Balaam and John Henry Newman in his discourse on Obedience without Love. Both of these classics display a rich sagacity and a solemn power of searching the heart. But they take different views of the character of this extraordinary heathen, and of his conduct upon first coming under the influence of the true God.

Such differences between high authorities, equally honest in seeking the meaning of Scripture, are to be explained by the discovery, made since their time, of the complex structure of the story, woven as it is from two differing and even contradictory traditions. We now, also, enjoy a fuller knowledge of the historical situation and the religious atmosphere in which Balaam is represented as acting. We are more able to place him on his proper stage in the history of religion--slowly making its long way up to Christ--and therefore more able to read the lessons which his story is fitted to afford us for our own faith and conduct.

1 A sermon preached in King's College Chapel, University of Aberdeen, October 20, 1912, from these texts: And when Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel he went not as at other times to seek for omens, but he set his face towards the wilderness (Num. xxiii. 23). Henceforth I call you not slaves, for the slave" knoweth not what his lord doeth, but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you (John's Gospel, xiv. 15).
You remember the outlines of the story. Alarmed by Israel’s defeat of Sihon, the king of the Amorites, Balak king of Moab sent across the Arabian wilderness for a distant prophet named Balaam, the son of Beor, to come and curse this people which threatened to devour the others. But under the influence of Israel's God Balaam, after some reluctance and doubt, refused to curse; and in four metrical Redes or Oracles he blessed Israel, acknowledging their irremissibleness under Divine Providence and predicting their dominion over their neighbours.

The prose narrative, which tells us all this, is one of the finest in the Old Testament. Partly from the language, partly from inconsistencies among the things told, it is clear that the writer has used (as I have said) two different traditions of the story and worked them, with some alterations, into the finished form which excites our admiration. His indifference to certain discrepancies of detail, which he has left standing, is the indifference of a powerfully dramatic spirit, absorbed by the conflict of rival religious influences, and by the victory, even in a heathen mind, of that purer and more potential faith with which Israel was identified. Our interest in so lofty an issue is not disturbed by the facts that Balaam is described now as an Aramean from as far away as the Euphrates, and again as an Ammonite riding into Moab upon his own ass from the immediately neighbouring province, now as convoyed by the princes of Balak, and again as accompanied by only two servants; now as receiving God's permission to go to Balak, and again as exciting God's wrath by consenting to go. Indeed the last of these differences, and the most curious, may be due not to two

1 Numbers xxii. 5a and xxiii. 7 from Aram; but the rest of xxii. 5 appears (from the Samaritan, Syriac and Vulgate) to have been originally to the land of the children of Ammon. For many other proofs of a double narrative see the commentaries, especially Prof. G. B. Gray's.
discrepant traditions, but to the naive effort of one and the same narrator to convey the first confused effects upon Balaam's mind of a religious force purer than the spirit in which he was accustomed to perform his offices. Such an ambiguity would be natural in a man dazzled by his encounter with the new light; and the narrator was only following the methods of his age if he articulated that ambiguity into a tale of two opposite commands from God. It is curious that Balaam himself contradicts his biographer. God, he says in one of his Redes,

God is not man to belie,
Neither man's son to repent.¹

This, however, is a subsidiary question, and cannot affect our reading of the writer's treatment of the mind and character of Balaam. In Balaam himself the writer is interested throughout. Recently this interest has been ignored or denied, as if Balaam's character did not matter much in the development of the drama. It is true that the religious interests of the story dominate the psychological. The main issue is between the purpose of God with Israel and the human powers which from Pharaoh to Sihon and Balak have sought to frustrate it. But this conflict is described --in detail and with zest--as being waged, and as issuing to the assurance of Israel's victory, within the mental experience of Balaam himself. I sympathise, therefore, with the older expositors who concentrate their attention upon the behaviour of this strange being, and take his character as the pivot of the story; only I agree that some of them have wrongly interpreted that character. Bishop Butler, for instance, treats Balaam as if his besetting sin were avarice. But except for an ambiguous statement-in only

¹ Num. xxiii. 9. So evident a contradiction testifies to the original independence of the poetical Redes and the prose narrative; and, so far as it goes, is evidence for the earlier date of the Redes.
one of the traditions—there is no imputation of avarice to Balaam. On the contrary, when Balak's promise of reward is repeated Balaam becomes only more decided not to disobey the word of God. Newman's explanation, that Balaam illustrates the insufficiency and the danger of obedience without love, is nearer the truth; but it lacks a full intelligence of the issues. There is a conflict in Balaam's mind, but this is not between duty and avarice or ambition. It is a conflict between the habits and ideas under which the prophets of the heathen worked and the religious influence of a higher order which is represented as coming upon Balaam from the God of Israel. The issue is between the spirit of Israel's religion and the less rational tempers of the other religions of the time, and it is worked out in the experience of one of the prophets of these religions, when brought face to face with the facts of Israel's history.

Balaam is essentially an Arab seer of an early type—the type which combined the priest's office of ritual, the diviner's reliance upon spells and lots, and the prophet's use of ecstasy and trance. Some of these men rose to great fame in Arabia, and were frequently called from a great distance, as Balaam was called by Balak, to assist chiefs or tribes who were in difficulty. One of the principal functions for which they were employed was to curse the foes of their employers; and this was regarded as a sacred function of divine efficacy, and was accompanied by sacrifices and other rites and by the reading of omens and the casting of lots.

To such practices our text states that Balaam was accustomed. He himself directs the building of altars and the elaborate sacrifices which precede his oracles, and he goes to seek for omens. Observe also in chapter xxiii. that when

1 Newman indeed denies that Balaam "made up his mind for himself according to the suggestions of avarice or ambition."
one site for these performances proves inauspicious and fails to compel him to curse Israel, he consents on Balak's motion to change the stage on the chance that his message may change with it. That is a resource characteristic of paganism all the world over; and along with other features of the story proves the writer's fidelity to the religious conditions of the time.

But while continuing to try all these, his professional rites and shifts, Balaam holds true to one thing, that he will only speak the word which God shall speak to him. To this he is constant, making it plain both before he will consent to come with Balak's messengers and throughout the course of gambling artifices which after his coming are employed to influence his message. His faithfulness is rewarded and his patience to listen receives an answer. The word comes to him, and it is a word not to curse but to bless.

On what does Balaam base the conviction for which he has waited so impartially, and which when it arrives is strong enough to overwhelm his former practices and ideas? He rests it on the fact that God has already blessed Israel. There is no use in him, Balaam, fighting against a Divine Fact. That is the whole matter—very simple and very clear.

He puts it in his opening words—

From Aram Baldk doth bring me,  
Moab's king from hills of the East.  
"Go curse thou me Jacob,  
And go damn Israel!"  
How curse I, whom God curseth not,  
How damn whom the LORD hath not damned?¹  
* * * * *

Behold, to bless I have gotten,  
And blessing I cannot reverse it!²

¹ xxiii. 7-8. ² xxiii, 20.
The facts are there, and in his various oracles he tells us how he sees them. The people of Israel already bears to his eye that strange aspect of peculiarity and aloofness which even through the centuries of their dispersion has marked them out as separate from the rest of humanity.

For from the rock's head I see them,
From the heights I behold them.
Lo, a people that dwelleth alone,
Nor reckons itself of the nations!¹

There is nothing in their condition which is ominous of disaster, or which justifies a curse.

I mark nothing wrong with Jacob,
Nor see any strain on Israel--²
any trace of weariness or stress. He points to their great numbers--

Who hath measured the dust of Jacob,
Or counted Israel's myriads?--³
to their wonderful progress out of Egypt-

'Tis, God out of Egypt that brought them,
And theirs is the strength of the wild ox;--⁴
to the goodly appearance of their camps, to their fertility,
to the power of their movements, to the ease with which they defeat their foes:

How goodly thy tents, O Jacob,
Thy dwellings, Israel!
Like valleys they spread,
Like riverside gardens,
Like cedars God planted,
Like oaks upon water!⁵

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¹ xxiii. 9
² xxiii. 21. ³ xxiii. 10 after the Greek. ⁴ xxiii. 22, xxiv. 8.
⁵ xxiv. 5, 6 (the last two lines from an emended text).
Lo, the folk like a lioness riseth,
Like a lion uprears.
Nor will couch till he eateth the prey,
And drinketh the blood of the slain.1

And finally he, a stranger and alien to the commonwealth of Israel, appreciates the faith and enthusiasm with which the strength of this people is instinct.

The LORD his God is with him,
And the sound of a King is upon him.2

It is in these facts, obvious to the plain man but rhythmic and eloquent to the poet, that Balaam finds the Presence and the Will of God, with the substance of the message he is to give to those who have asked him for it. Against such a tide of reality what does it avail to set up bulwarks of altars, of ritual and of magic? Of what use are spells, enchantments and omens? You will observe that Balaam does not speak of morality. He has not the conscience of the later prophets, nor any idea of God's demands for penitence, purity and service from men. It is historical and obvious facts on which he insists. Yet Balaam has his own sense of religion and of the character of God. He is at least awake to the Divine consistency; and with some anticipation both of the religious faith and the rational science of still distant days--which is startling to find in so early and rude a figure--he affirms the regularity and faithfulness of all God's working:

Arise and hearken, Balak,
Give ear to me, son of Sippor!
God is not man to belie,
Neither man's son to repent.
Hath He said and doth not perform,
Or spoken and will not fulfil it?3

1 xxiii. 24. 2 xxiii. 21. 3 xxiii. 18, 19
There you have his whole equipment and character. Brought up in the irrational methods of heathenism, accustomed to believe in the omnipotence of rites and spells, and anxious to magnify his office, Balaam has yet a certain openness of mind to facts, a capacity of his own to read their consistency and rhythm and a courage to face their consequences, which prevail over the prejudices and interests by which he is swayed. There is a primitive integrity of mind and a primitive reverence in the man which grips our respect--grips our respect and also lets us see how God in all ages has chosen and equipped His prophets.

Nor is our appreciation of this mind, groping so far back there on the confines of light and darkness, lessened by the fact that it did not rise clear of all the passion of its time but is described as working heavily in trance or ecstasy.

Rede of Balaam, Bear's son,
Rede of the eye-sealed (?) man.-
In vision he sees the Almighty,
Falling yet open of eye (?).¹

In Israel the beginnings of prophecy were also in trance; and uncontrollable excitement has characterised the origins of genuinely religious movements within Christianity itself. Balaam has the servile temper which does not understand the fulness of the truth that has come to him and staggers beneath it. He grovels under the approach of his convictions, but he honestly utters them when they arrive. If I may take another Arabian prophet, upon much the same stage of development as Balaam, I would remind you that Mohammed behaved very similarly under the earliest impulses of his calling—a bemused, ecstatic, perhaps epileptic man: yet he lived to bring all Arabia to his feet.

¹ xxiv. 15, 16,
For this is the kind of man whom, though blinded and "prostrate, God shall one day call to stand up and send upon his way in full control of his faculties. This is the spirit which, if it has been faithful as the slave of the truth, shall at last hear the glad words: *Henceforth I call you not slaves, for the slave knoweth not what his lord doeth but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known to you.* In Balaam we have one end of that long course of gradual revelation of which the other is reached in Christ and His disciples.

For in no other way did God raise up the long succession of Hebrew prophets who led to Christ. In early Israel we see Prophecy so evidently rising out of the same low religious environment and by means of the same convictions of inspiration by God, that the experience attributed to Balaam may well stand as the symbol of the origins of Prophecy; just as at the other end of the history of Israel the equally curious figure of Jonah is the symbol of some of the later experiences of prophecy. God picked His prophets man by man out of a state of religion little removed from heathenism, and educated their primitive power, to see and to be true to facts, into the clear knowledge of His nature and His Will. Like those of their Arab kinsmen the early Hebrew seers were engaged with a rude ritual-common to all the peoples of their race-with divination by omens and lots, with blessing the arms of their people and banning their foes; while the trance and the dream were their frequent means of seeking the Divine Will. But gradually

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1 Several features both in the prose and in the poetry converge on the probability that the date of the story as we have it (whatever earlier elements it may contain) is that of the early kingdom of Israel when the nation was rich in instincts of power and growth, and when the new order of prophecy, recently arisen under Samuel, was emerging from its rudimentary conditions. See my Schweich Lectures before the British Academy on *The Early Poetry of Israel in its Physical and Social Origins*, 70, 71.
they discarded all these things. Under Samuel prophecy was separated from the ritual with its paralysing influences. From Samuel onwards prophecy repudiated divination and magic. With men like Elijah and Amos it threw off allegiance to political patrons; and in time it rose even free of ecstasy, till, as St. Paul says, the spirits of the prophets were subject to the prophets. And all these advances and emancipations depended on the individual prophet's own mental integrity, on his eye for facts and on his courage to face them: the facts of his people's history and the truth of their present condition; the facts of the moral world and their enduring and impregnable firmness. There, of course, the prophets soared into realms undreamt of by Balaam. It was this loyalty to facts which gave them their scorn of ritual and magic and their uncompromising courage against the political interests of kings and the vulgar unethical ideals of the people. It was this, and this alone, which to the last constituted the distinction of the true prophets from the false; who also claimed to speak in the name of God and many of whom, though stupid, were not insincere in the convictions they expressed. Personal character then, this mental integrity which saw the fact, moral or historical, and read it and was brave to be loyal to it, was the basis and condition of the true prophet.

Such men, bred like Balaam in more or less servile relations to the truth, subject in many ways to the superstitions and false science of their age, God lifted out of their slavery and, in the words of Christ, made them His friends. They enjoyed, as they tell us, a close communion with Himself. They were forgiven and they were trusted afresh by His Grace, past all their deserts or abilities. They were steeped in His purity, His patience and His love. He led them into the secrets of His nature and His will. He made them partners with Himself in His passion for men.
By their own sufferings for the sins of others,¹ He gave them an understanding of His very heart; and they felt how it was not only full of travail for the spiritual victory of His children, but itself bore to the uttermost weight the shame and the misery of their sins and defeats.

That was the friendship to which God lifted the prophets and Christ lifted His disciples, and that was the Gospel they won from it for all mankind.

For all mankind—you remember the prayer of one who was himself a great prophet: _Would God that all the LORD’S people were prophets, and that the LORD would put His spirit upon them!_

My brethren, for you and for me, the lessons of this long, slow and painful history of our religion are these.

God deals with us one by one on the ground and the temper of our own character. It is true that His Grace does meet and touch the very lowest—mentally and morally the very lowest. And of them he can make the highest, for He maketh all things new.

But He must have on our part a certain truthfulness, if even He is to work anything with us; a certain mental integrity, however ignorant; a heart, above all, for facts. He must have in us reverence and deep awe before the facts of His moral world; honesty and courage to face the facts of our own characters and conduct. For these things mean penitence, and with the penitent alone He can work. Behold Thou desirest truth in the inward parts. If that is there, the rest by His Grace shall follow. Of His slaves He shall make His friends, lifting us through Christ into His Love—into the freedom and the trustfulness and the security, which no sincerity, nor courage, nor any other strength of character may assure—however indispensable they all are; but which His Love alone and a daily communion with Him can bring to our weak wills and feeble hearts.

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¹ As notably in the case of Hosea.

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